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An exploration of emotionally-oriented determinants affecting the decision of degree-mobile Britons to study in the Netherlands



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August 2015

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Key words: international study migration, degree mobility, emotionally-oriented determinants, British study migrants, Dutch higher education.

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Foreword

This thesis represents the final component of my Master of Science degree in Cultural Geography at the University of Groningen. Following two years of stimulating modules in the field of cultural geography and social science research, I was inspired to select the increasingly high-profile field of migration studies as the context for my thesis. By focusing on motivations for international student migration, I was able to combine aspects of people and places with my professional field and personal passion of international higher education.

This work could not have been accomplished without the assistance of a great number of people. From the University of Groningen, I would like to thank Ajay Bailey for initially sparking my enthusiasm for this subject during the Migration module. I am extremely grateful to Tialda Haartsen for her ongoing enthusiastic supervision. Bettina van Hoven also provided many valuable start-up suggestions and contacts. I am further indebted to Frank Vanclay, Viktor Venhorst and Richard Rijnks for their helpful input along the way. Thanks too to Jemma Davies of the marketing and communication department.

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Abstract

International degree mobile study migration is growing rapidly and is being increasingly recognised as a positive and important economic and social phenomenon. However, despite a significant increase in British university tuition fees in 2012, compared to other nationalities relatively few British students study outside the UK, even in countries such as the Netherlands, which have much lower tuition fees. It is not clear what the reasons are for this reluctance. This thesis attempts to contribute to a better understanding of this and of international study migration in general, by examining how emotionally oriented factors affect British students who do go to the Netherlands to study. This specific migration pathway has not previously been researched and, in addition, much of the existing study migration literature focuses on rationally oriented motivators. An exploratory, modified grounded theory approach was used, in which 22 British students studying in the Netherlands were asked during semi-structured personal interviews to explain how they came to the decision to study in the Netherlands. The conceptual framework is based on relevant recent general migration and international study migration decision-making theories related to emotional determinants. These determinants are categorised as social, geographical or psychological factors.

Although this qualitative study was not designed to provide detailed insights into the relative importance of each of the determinants found in this study migration pathway, a number of determinants were identified which either extend existing theory or were previously underemphasised in the literature. These new determinants should be incorporated into any follow-up quantitative survey, which would then be able to measure their relative importance per type of study migrant. The most notable aspects identified were as follows.

Under social factors:

- jealousy of exciting adventures of prior study migrants, and anticipated increased social standing amongst peers by being seen to study in an attractive foreign location, all intensified by social media, can be strong influences on would-be migrants.
- a lack of fellow nationals at a university can act as a motivator for pioneers who wish to create their own unique experience.
- disapproval of the migration idea by stay at home peers sometimes actually stimulates the desire to migrate.
- the visual component of communication media, such as Skype, facilitates potentially homesick students in feeling comfortable in the host country, to a greater extent than audio-only media.

Under geographical factors:

- using images of historic-looking buildings in promotional material can provide confidence in the trustworthiness of an institution.

- the perception that it is possible to operate in English in the Netherlands, contrasted with an expectation that this is not possible in most other European countries, can be a motivator.

Under psychological factors:

- a predisposition to contact with people of other nationalities can be a strong driver.
- various positive emotional responses to the large tuition fee differential can all act to stimulate study migration.
- a low tuition fee can reduce expectations amongst British people as to the quality of the university charging it, thus discouraging enrolment.
- experiencing a radically different application culture in the Netherlands compared to Britain makes potential migrants feel more welcome, thus stimulating enrolment.
- a positive reaction to the feeling of having been given an unexpected second chance to study due to lower admission levels in the Netherlands can be a motivator.
- anxiety of avoiding a later mid-life crisis by having a foreign study adventure now, can be a motivator.
- an anticipated sense of satisfaction resulting from a willingness to deviate from peers' more conventional life choices can motivate.

In conclusion, discounting the many rational determinants not discussed in this study, British students appear go to study in the Netherlands for a complex and varied set of emotionally-oriented reasons. Many of these determinants broadly correspond with those found in earlier research into international study migration, but a number of previously underemphasised motivators were also found. These differences could be due to unique characteristics of this particular migration pathway, but also to differences in the method of research used.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Justification of research topic

Cultural geography is concerned with investigating the relationship between people and places (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001). One aspect of this is the decisions people make in relation to places; for example in terms of their movement, or migration. Wilson (2010) concludes that both interregional and international migration rates per age category peak significantly in the young adult phase. One of the reasons for large-scale movement in this age group is in order to follow higher education. This is only available in certain places, in university towns and cities, so some kind of migration is frequently a necessity to follow an appropriate course. When young people migrate to study somewhere, a movement between places is created (Skeldon, 1997). This thesis deals with international study migration (hereafter termed ISM), which can be characterised as a temporary, voluntary and legal form of migration (Bailey, 2001). The last few years have seen a worldwide continuation of the long-term trend of steadily increasing rates of ISM (Haussen, 2014). Raghuram (2013) identifies ISM as the most rapidly growing form of migration worldwide. For example, between 2000 and 2008 there was an increase in absolute terms of ISM worldwide of about 70%.

Contrary to this trend, the percentage of Britons who follow a whole degree abroad is, at just 1.3% of all British students, currently small and only increasing very gradually (Van Elk, 2012). In 2012, however, the UK government controversially allowed English universities to raise their annual tuition fees significantly, from two or three thousand Pounds to nine thousand Pounds (Wakeling 2013). There has therefore since been much speculation in the British media as to whether this would be the catalyst for large numbers of British students to become 'tuition fee refugees', taking advantage of free mobility within the EU to follow much cheaper degree courses on the continent, where tuition fees have remained low (Dandridge, 2012). The outcomes of this policy are being closely monitored in other European countries, some of which may be considering also raising tuition fees (Wakeling 2013). A better understanding of how a particular group of students reaches the decision to study in a specific foreign country could thus be a valuable contribution to this policy debate.

The Netherlands has the highest absolute number of degree programmes in English of any non-native English speaking country (Van Elk, 2012). Combined with the easy and affordable access from the UK, it is not surprising that it is seen as the country most likely to attract British students seeking affordable higher education abroad. However, despite its size and proximity, the UK provides only 1.9% of international students in the Netherlands, and is not even represented in the top-ten of supplier nations for Dutch higher education (Van Elk, 2012). Although much attention has been

paid to understanding migration and international study location choices in general (Findlay, 2012), there is currently no published research on the specific pathway of British students moving to the Netherlands. In addition, previous studies on student migration choice have tended to be quantitative in nature (Raghuram, 2013). Predominantly rationally oriented drivers for ISM have been measured and described. Extending previous studies by examining specifically emotionally oriented determinants related to this migration pathway will shed more light on drivers involved, aiding understanding both of this specific pathway, and contemporary ISM in general.

Exploratory, qualitative methods were therefore used to gain a better insight into this area. The results are potentially of interest to ISM academics, host universities and governments, would-be migrant students, and the ISM industry in general.

1.2 Research aim and question

The aim of this research is to gain a better understanding of the emotionally oriented determinants which affect the decision of degree-mobile young Britons to study in the Netherlands. The research question is thus:

How do emotionally oriented determinants affect the decision of degree-mobile Britons to study in the Netherlands?

The sub-questions used to structure the answers to this question were formulated on the basis of the theoretical framework, and are therefore explained in Section 2.6, after the theoretical framework.

1.3 Types of ISM

A division can be made between degree mobile and credit mobile ISM. The most common type of credit mobility in Europe is the Erasmus+ Programme. The migration here is only for a short part of the course, and the full degree is gained from the home university (Rodriguez, 2011). These exchanges usually last for a period of one semester, so typically four to five months. Erasmus exchange students, by definition, will almost always return to their home university to complete their studies anyway, even if they would like to stay in the host country.

This thesis instead focuses on degree-mobile students. Degree mobility is defined as ISM in which a full degree programme is followed in another country (Raghuram, 2013). Some of the drivers motivating choices for both these types of ISM show some similarities, but credit mobility requires less personal investment in the migration, and the economic and organisational consequences are much lower for the higher education actors involved. The long-term patterns of geographical movement of degree-mobile students are clearly less predictable than credit-mobile students, as they are potentially

free to stay in a host city or country after graduation as long as there are no visa restrictions, which is the case within the EU. For these reasons, it was chosen to ignore credit-mobile students in this study.

Degree-mobile students includes those who follow either a bachelor's or a master's course. Bachelor's degree courses usually last three to four years. This may, however, include a period of time spent elsewhere, either through an Erasmus+ exchange or other similar study period abroad. Particularly in the case of universities of applied sciences, up to one year of the programme is frequently an industrial placement, which can often be in a country other than the host nation. The total stay in the host country is thus typically two and a half to three years. In addition, during this period of study, most students return to their home country or spend time in third countries during the two to three months of vacation. In contrast, master's degrees are frequently just ten to 12 months in duration, although they can be two years, for example as common in Scandinavia. A minority of master's graduates remain in the host country to live and work after graduation, but the majority expect beforehand to, and actually do, move elsewhere.

1.4 Societal benefits of ISM

ISM is valuable for human well being in general for many reasons. Cairns (2014) proposes that the optimisation of educational provision resulting from widespread ISM is an advantage for the whole of international society. Many national government institutes, such as the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy, which examine the issue from an economic perspective, agree that ISM has many benefits (Van Elk, 2012). They conclude that it is a positive phenomenon, as it leads overall to a more efficient allocation of students, and stimulates healthy competition between universities in different countries. They also claim that international contact during their studies allows all students to improve their multicultural skills, and in the long term improves international trade relations. In addition, international spillovers of knowledge and skills, and the production of research and development agglomeration, are also seen as positive side effects. Wei (2013) agrees that ISM is good for trade, promotes innovation, increases knowledge flows, and builds networks.

With respect to higher education institutions in particular, Raghuram (2013) argues that it is beneficial for internationally oriented universities to actively stimulate such degree-mobile recruitment. Findlay (2011) concurs; pointing out that ISM can be considered an important source of both financial capital, in the form of tuition fees and/or government subsidies; as well as cultural capital, such as more culturally enriched classroom environments. There is also evidence that ISM students achieve better results on average than domestic students, which can benefit universities for a variety of short and long term reasons (Findlay 2011). For all these reasons, it is worthwhile attempting to optimise understanding of the factors driving or hindering ISM.

1.5 Thesis structure

The theoretical framework is outlined in Chapter 2, resulting in the conceptual framework used for this research, which in turn structures the sub-questions. Concepts incorporated are divided into general migration theories and those which refer specifically to student migration decisions. Chapter 3 then describes the methodology employed in detail. Chapter 4 contains the results, based on the sub-questions, which in turn are embedded in the conceptual framework. Conclusions, in which the main research question is answered, and a reflection on the study are contained in Chapter 5.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

Castles, De Haas and Miller (2014) point out that it is too simplistic to see all migrants as moving only from poor to rich countries in search of personal economic improvement. For example, the more highly economically developed the nations involved are, the greater the quantity and complexity of its migration patterns and migrant motivations. The context of this study, degree-mobility between two relatively rich countries, is just one example of modern migration flows. Many possible motivators and factors could be involved in the decision-making process.

Since Ravenstein's seminal work in the 1880s hypothesising laws of migration, a variety of attempts to understand and model migration in general have been made (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014). However, there is no one general theory which is universally accepted as accurately reflecting all migration decisions. As a result of dissatisfaction with purely rational, neo-classical explanations of migratory behaviour, recent general migration research has tended to focus more on emotional drivers behind decision-making attempting, for example, to better take into account human agency (Raghuram, 2013). In line with this, only those theories which are connected with the emotional side of the decision-making process have been incorporated into this study. The most applicable ISM decision-making findings related to emotionally oriented motivators for this group of migrants are reviewed below. In conclusion, these theories are then visualised in the conceptual model.

It was found helpful for analysis to sub-divide the theories related to these emotional factors into three categories: social, geographical, and psychological. These categories are explained further below. It was found that the majority of such emotional factors of general migration theories are related to social factors; whereas most of the ISM decision-making aspects pertain to geographical factors. Very few existing theories seem to be specifically psychologically related.

2.2 Emotionally-oriented social factors potentially affecting ISM

Network migration theory (Bohra & Massey, 2009) predicts that international movement of people is promoted by the presence in the host community of pioneering early movers. Word-of-mouth promotion to potential migrants back home, and in situ support of fellow national newcomers, are regarded as important factors in stimulating migration. This builds on migration systems

theory (Mabogunje, 1970), which includes the idea that positive feedback from pioneers tends to generate new migrants. When they report back to friends about their experiences abroad, they strongly influence migration decisions (Beech, 2014).

These ideas are supported by findings of research specifically into ISM decision-making. Many authors find that the existence of family or friends in the host country or city significantly increases the likelihood of study migration there (Beine, Noël & Ragot, 2014; Cairns, 2014; Furukawa, 2013; Brooks & Waters, 2009). The chances of personal success in the host country for migrant students when studying abroad for a significant period of time are increased if familiar faces are waiting to welcome them upon arrival, and to support them during their studies if necessary. This motivator also applies to the sending parents, who have many reasons for wanting to maximise the success of their child's migration abroad for study (Brooks & Waters, 2009). Given that relatively very few British people have gone to study in the Netherlands, it would be interesting to gain insight into how the participants see the link between themselves and any fellow national peers they know who had already made the same decision.

A second recent shift in thinking about general migration is to move away from viewing the decision as purely individual, and instead see it as rooted in the family or group situation (Bailey, 2004). This is a recognition that most regular migration takes place, not as an individual, but together as a family or close-knit social group. This increases the complexity and the number of factors which need to be taken into account when making a migration decision. A common consequence of family influence is the prevention of a desired migration when the partner is unwilling or unable to move, for social or economic reasons. In this case, the would-be migrant is termed a 'tied stayer'. A related situation is if the partner does agree to move despite it not being their preferred choice, making the partner a 'tied mover.'

As with network migration theory, the principles of family-based decision-making seem to find support amongst scholars of ISM decision-making. For example, Meango (2014) emphasises the degree to which student migration is a family decision. Findlay (2012), and Brooks and Waters (2009) both agree that support from the family is an important factor. This not only affects the decision to stay or go, but also the choice of destination. This determinant is also supported by Cairns (2014), who identifies friends as important influences too. Raghuram (2013) agrees that family preferences have significant impact on destination choice, but elaborates that selections are made not so much for particular countries, but target specific preferred cities.

It can be assumed that the majority of British student migrants are at a stage in their lives when they are relatively unencumbered by family restraints. However, some are in relationships, so a question to be answered was how these bonds are experienced and dealt with. In addition, it is interesting to investigate how those partly or wholly funded by their parents feel about such financial reliance.

Thirdly, in the field of societal developments about which theories on their effect on migration exist, the recent rapid increase in information and communication technology (hereafter 'ICT') could clearly influence contemporary migratory behaviour. The potential consequences are that this might facilitate increased migration (Thomas & Cooke, 2013). This is related to the concept of place elasticity (Barcus & Brunn, 2010), which suggests improved communication technologies allow people who have strong bonds with their home location to feel increasingly able to leave for long periods or even permanently. People who might in the past not have left (stayers), now dare to undertake a migration. The age group concerned in this study can be assumed to have all grown up in the age of easy, instant, worldwide communication, and so perhaps takes its advantages for granted. It was nevertheless possible and revealing to find out what kind of influence low barrier communication they feel had on their migration decision.

Finally, a stimulating culture of migration in origin countries, a potentially strong societal effect, was postulated by Bohra and Massey (2009). Here, the prevalence of mass migration in a community creates social pressure on all young people to migrate to avoid being regarded as unsuccessful in the eyes of their origin community. Given the currently low numbers of British who migrate abroad to study (Van Elk, 2012), this influence is expected not to be present as a motivator, but useful insights might still be gained as to how study migrants describe themselves in relation to the low-migration culture in their places of origin.

2.3 Emotionally-oriented geographical factors potentially affecting ISM

Beech (2014) links the general characteristics of the target country, region or city, as perceived by the migrant student, to Said's (1985) concept of imagined geographies, which focuses on how a place you have not physically been to is experienced in your mind. She identifies social networks and the media as the two main sources of prior image development. Related to this, Findlay (2012) postulates that migrant students are motivated by the concept of experiencing a unique adventure abroad. Similarly, a typical justification many British student migrants give for studying abroad is that they are seeking something different to the standard UK student experiences (Waters & Brooks 2011). Paradoxically, and less obviously however, they simultaneously want their host university to be somewhere familiar, or "knowable" (Waters & Brooks, 2011, p.567). They usually have not physically visited the destination beforehand; instead, the perceived recognisability is predominantly derived from television and other visual media, rather than social networks, in contrast to what Beech claims. (Thomas & Cooke, 2013) emphasise that the easier availability of good quality information due to improved ICT can act to make foreign countries more accessible and easier to function in. Parallel to this, Waters, Brooks and Pimlott-Wilson (2011) note that when there has been previous personal experience of actually visiting the host country, this often acts as a motivator. The questions thus arise as to

how British students in the Netherlands feel about their study migration in terms of familiarity with the destination and imagined geographies.

Secondly, Kahanec and Kralikova (2011) find that, for international students in general, offering educational programmes in English, as opposed to other languages, is a major factor. This is mainly due to increased accessibility and chances of study success but, in addition, some non-native speakers have as a goal the aim of improving their English through experiencing it as their language of instruction. Improving competence by studying in the target language can also apply to other languages, but much less frequently. British students are noted by Brooks and Waters (2009) to be extremely reluctant to attempt studying in another language. More surprisingly, they are even deterred from making the study migration if the main language in the host country's community is not English. Findlay (2006) concurs with these apparent barriers. It was already clear that the vast majority of British students only select higher education programmes in which English is the language of instruction, but it is not known how British students feel about coming to a country, such as the Netherlands, in which English is not the main language used in the degree course's surrounding community.

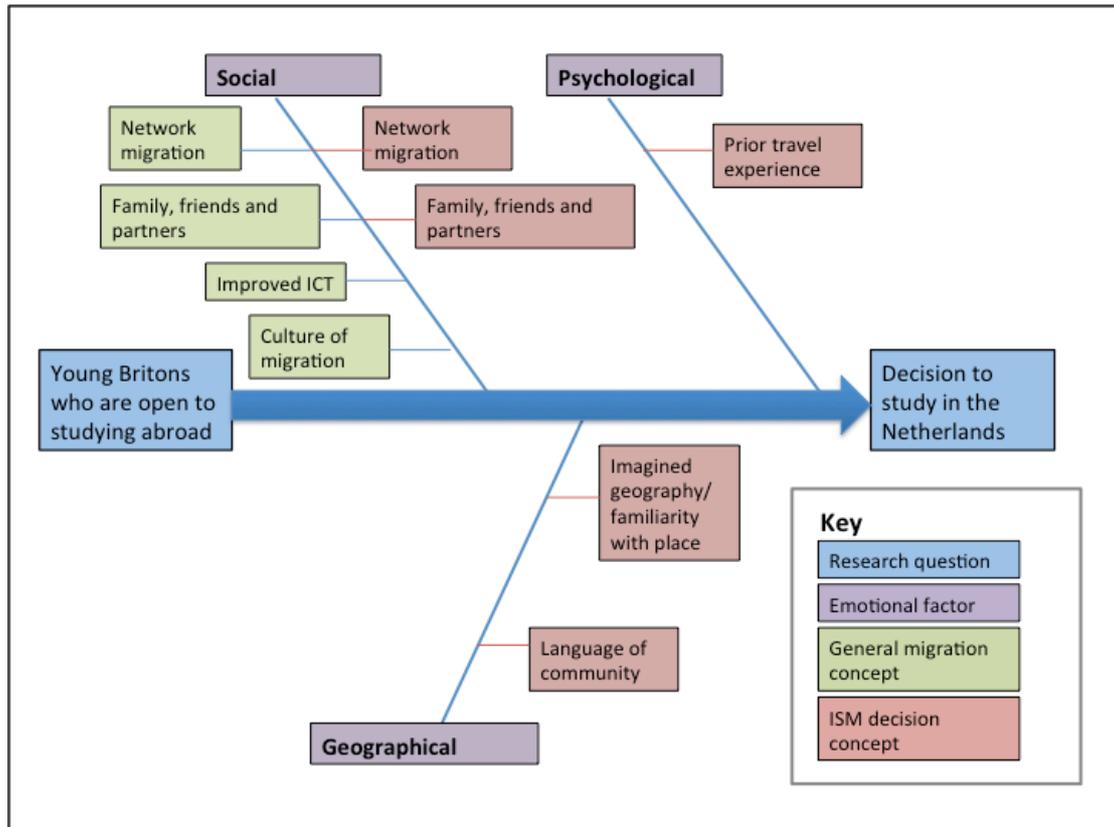
2.4 Emotionally-oriented psychological factors potentially affecting ISM

Brooks and Waters (2009) find that experiences of having travelled in general as a child/young adult before studying actively affected young persons' decision to study abroad in the first place. The question thus arises as to how British students in the Netherlands feel their study migration was affected by prior foreign travel experience. Apart from this, no other general migration nor ISM decision-making theories were found which specifically relate to psychological factors.

2.5 Conceptual model

The above literature framework thus leads to the following conceptual model. This, in turn, is used to structure the results, and the final conclusions.

Figure 1: Conceptual model – Emotionally oriented factors and related concepts which can have an effect on the decision of degree mobile British people whether or not to study in the Netherlands



2.6 Conclusion

Based on the above theoretical framework, the following sub-questions were formulated:

Social factors

- How do British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands:
 - experience the link between themselves and any fellow national peers they know who had or have already made the same study migration?
 - perceive the influence of family ties, friends and relationships on their migration decision?
 - feel about the effect of modern communication technology on their migration decision?

- describe themselves in relation to the low-migration culture in their places of origin?
- How are British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands affected by social factors in ways not previously emphasised in the existing literature?

Geographical factors

- How do British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands:
 - feel about coming to the Netherlands in terms of imagined geographies and familiarity with the destination?
 - experience coming to a country in which English is commonly spoken but not the main language?
- How are British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands affected by geographical factors in ways not previously emphasised in the existing literature?

Psychological factors

- How do British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands:
 - feel their study migration was affected by prior foreign travel experience?
- How are British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands affected by psychological factors in ways not previously emphasised in the existing literature?

Based on answering these questions, it is hoped that this thesis will provide further insights into this particular little-researched migration pathway, and in addition contribute to the deeper understanding of international student migration in general.

3. Methodology

3.1 Justification of methodology chosen

A qualitative approach was chosen for this research, as the goal was to be able to understand the decisions made by the target group regarding their study migration. Interviews were chosen above other qualitative methods as participants' individual personal experiences were of interest. Interviews were also more convenient to arrange than attempting to gather students together in focus groups. Forms of observation were not appropriate to the research aim, as the social setting of the information gathering was not important. The chosen method was a modified grounded theory approach (Morse & Richards, 2002), in that relatively open questions were asked initially and the resultant data was thoroughly analysed to identify what could be learned inductively, before referring back to the theory to see how it matched.

Semi-structured personal interviews were employed, using an interview guide (see Appendix 1), with 13 British students already studying, eight planning to study, and one who recently completed a university course in the Netherlands. Full in-depth interviews were not considered feasible for this research. The participants cooperated as a result of polite requests to be interviewed, but would have been much less likely to have consented if the interviews were to have taken much longer, such as more than an hour. 14 of the interviews were 20 to 35 minutes in length, which was considered and subsequently found to be sufficiently long to obtain the insights required. The remaining eight were shorter (approximately five minutes each in length), as the participants had no more time available. Although not ideal, this was nevertheless found to be sufficient to gain the most important data.

As with any self-reported studies, a disadvantage of interviews is that it has to be assumed that the opinions given accurately reflect the actual motivations. It is conceivable that participants may deliberately or subconsciously provide not completely honest data. This might, for example, be due to cognitive dissonance, or a desire to provide socially acceptable answers. For example, a young person may not be prepared to admit they wanted to escape their home or partner, or that they were motivated by the idea of being able to use a lot of drugs in the Netherlands easily. However, the advantage that interviews were considered to provide the most direct route to gain the required information was decisive in this case.

Quantitative methods could also have been used. These could have provided conclusions regarding the relative importance of the various factors and drivers. For example, large scale surveys could have been set up in which students were asked to list the factors which influenced their decisions. A larger percentage of the total population could have been surveyed in this way, and potentially reliable statistical inferences made. Such quantitative methods, however, were not selected for use, for three reasons. Firstly, the

nature of the research question is such that richer data concerning decision-making and in some cases emotions could be explored. The literature suggests that the study migration decisions made are based on a complex, wide ranging set of factors. Participants were allowed to speak at length about their decision-making process. Nuances of opinion and unforeseen relationships between factors could be integrated into the analysis. Secondly, interviews were expected to lead to more reliable answers. A small-scale online survey try out on two British students in the Netherlands, suggested that even simply worded questions were easily be misinterpreted by respondents. For example, analysis of the answers to the survey question “Why did you decide to study outside the UK?” revealed that one of the two respondents had partly confused it with the second question “Why did you choose the Netherlands?” which, if it had occurred during the research proper, would thus immediately have corrupted the data. Semi-structured personal interviews allowed the researcher to guide the respondent in understanding the intention of the question, should there have been any confusion. Finally, it was judged to be too difficult to obtain a sufficient number of satisfactorily completed surveys. Based on the Facebook page ‘British and Irish Students in the Netherlands’, in the absence of more reliable sources, the order of magnitude of British nationals currently studying in the Netherlands is only in the hundreds at most. Reliable quantitative data would require a sample of a significant number of these. No one single database containing contact details of more than a fraction of these students was found.

If British students in the Netherlands had been concentrated in a small number of higher educational establishments, it might have been possible to visit that location and invite responses on the spot, or else use formal or informal networks to obtain reliable lists. Again based on the Facebook page mentioned above, British students are spread out over a wide number of Dutch institutions. This Facebook page would probably have been the best method for seeking cooperation with respondents without further gatekeepers, but it was anticipated that an insufficient number would respond positively to a request to complete a survey from a stranger.

3.2 Interview content and structure

The interviews were generally held in the following way. First, a brief introduction was made, clarifying the intention and procedure, and gaining oral consent. For the longer interviews only, time was then taken to orally request some general personal details. These were age, higher educational background, county and degree of urbanity of parental address, and parental financial background. These were not directly related to the research question, but it was considered prudent to obtain this information should it become useful to cross-reference at a later date. These questions also acted as a warming up for the main part of the interview, allowing both parties to relax and to build rapport.

For all 22 interviews, the question most directly related to the research question was then posed. Participants were asked to describe in their own words how they reached the decision to study in the Netherlands. They were thus free to elaborate on their own story, telling it in their own fashion, emphasising and omitting what they wished. This resulted in a variety of levels of detail and styles of storytelling. The intention was that this would provide the richest source of insightful data to most accurately reflect the participants' personal experience of their decision-making process. In general, it seemed to be quite easy for the participants to recall the reasoning they had employed in making decision, although some elements sometimes came back to them later in the interview. The interviewer made no mention of social science jargon, such as emotional determinants, keeping the style informal and conversational, in order to optimise the relaxed atmosphere and thus enhance data transference.

Once participants had appeared to have reached a natural conclusion to their story, follow up topical probe questions were posed, wherever appropriate, using a pre-prepared checklist, to clarify and confirm the various possible factors. Sometimes this resulted in the participant amending or adding to their description of their decision-making process. Finally, participants' opinions were gained about: their prior expectations of studying in the Netherlands, compared to actual experiences; degree of satisfaction with their choice; how peers decided whether or not to study abroad; what aspects they felt a Dutch university marketeer should emphasise; and the extent to which lower tuition fees helps poorer British students. These were not directly linked to answering the main research question, but it was hoped that, by probing from these different angles, shadowed data (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011) might emerge from some of the answers, providing unexpected insights into the decision-making progress.

3.3 Participant recruitment

Participant selection

To select the best possible participants, it is first necessary to define the study population (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). In this case, this was students of British nationality, who grew up and attended secondary school in the UK, and who are either applying to, are currently following, or have recently completed higher education courses in the Netherlands. It includes students following both bachelor's and master's courses, at both academic universities and universities of applied sciences. The master's students studied either in Amsterdam (capital of the Netherlands and internationally-known tourist destination), or smaller, less well-known provincial cities. Wilkins (2003) (in Beech, 2014) found that for students who had existing family ties with a host country ('returning natives'), this was the predominant motivator, weighing far more heavily than other factors. This category of potential participants was therefore filtered out in this study. The topic is quite broad, exploratory, segmented, and forms the core of the primary research conducted, thus necessitating a relatively large selection of participants for a qualitative study (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2011).

Participants in qualitative research need to be information-rich in order to be valuable to the study (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey 2011). All British students in the Netherlands are likely to be able to reflect intelligently on the paths that brought them to make a study migration, and they all have their own unique stories to tell. In this sense, all members of the target group were likely to be of interest to this study.

British students in the Netherlands can be considered a specific relatively homogenous group. They are nearly all young, healthy, intelligent adults. They can also all be considered to have demonstrated some form of adventurous spirit, in taking the relatively unusual career step of studying abroad. On the other hand, within this study population, participants were found who represented a wide range of degree level and type, level of institute, geographical (regional) origin within the UK, socio-economic background, and age. This was felt to increase the chances of gaining understanding of the study migration decisions for this group. They can be characterised as typical, rather than critical cases (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2011).

Initially, it was considered whether or not to also interview British students who chose not to go to the Netherlands to study, to ask them why they had not done so. It was eventually decided not to do this, both in the interests of streamlining the research, and as informal pre-research suggested that the majority of British students elsewhere simply have not thought of going to the Netherlands to study. Such interviews would have therefore been short and of limited value.

In order to increase the chance that a full, in-depth understanding of the nature of the drivers and motivating factors behind the various combinations of course level and institution type could be explored, a small number (3 to 8) of each combination sub-group were selected. The ultimate choice was further determined by availability and willingness to participate, and found through professional networks. Dutch higher education institutions are officially not supposed to divulge details of students, so permission was generally refused when lists of British students were formally requested. It was not found to be necessary to adapt the study population inductively in the course of the research.

The participants were divided into sub-groups according to level of higher education involved (academic university or university of applied sciences); and level of degree involved (bachelor's or master's). The master's students attended either the University of Amsterdam, or a provincial Dutch university of similar status (Nijmegen or Utrecht). No master's students at universities of applied sciences were sought, as there are relatively few such courses in the Netherlands.

Table 1 – Overview of participants according to level of degree and institute.

	University	University of Applied Sciences	Total
Master's	University of Amsterdam (6)	None	9

	Provincial Dutch universities (Nijmegen and Utrecht) (3)		
Bachelor's	University of Groningen (8)	Stenden (5)	13
Total	17	5	22

After these 22 interviews had been conducted, it was felt that saturation had been reached in each sub-group. Relatively few new insights were being heard. It was decided to stop interviewing new participants at that point.

Participants were prepared to take part out of goodwill. Two additionally requested a copy of the final thesis on the basis of personal interest in the subject. One participant requested (and was given) help in finding interviewees for her own master's thesis, in return for her cooperation.

Interview logistics

Wherever possible, interviews were held face to face (four of the longer and all eight shorter interviews). When this was not possible, Skype was used (for ten of the longer interviews). In most cases, this was with video as well as audio contact. Occasionally it was not possible to have video contact due to technical issues, so only audio was used. Most participants were in the Netherlands at the time of the interview, except for one who was in the UK, and one who was on internship in Indonesia.

All interviews took place from early February to early April 2015. They were recorded, transcribed, and subsequently analysed using Atlas TI. Full transcripts of all the interviews can be found in Appendix 2. Initially, the interviews were transcribed within two days of the interview, but later on this was no longer possible. The maximum time duration between interview and transcription was six weeks.

3.4 Positionality

The interviewer and all the participants had in many ways a similar background. All were (being) higher educated; shared a common native language; and had grown up in the UK but had moved to the Netherlands at some point. In this sense, an emic perspective was taken (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). However, some important differences between the interviewer and participants also result in taking a more etic perspective (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). The interviewer originally migrated for personal, not career, reasons; is a part time student with a long-standing permanent professional job; and intends to continue living in the country. The participants, on the other hand, were motivated to migrate by some combination of educational career or personal growth goals, and almost none currently expect to stay in the Netherlands permanently. In addition, the interviewer was middle-aged, whereas the participants were young (18 to 27). The interviewer was male; 16 of the participants were male and 6 female.

In the 14 longer interviews, the participants were aware of the interviewer's full name, job and city of residence. For the eight shorter interviews, all held face to face, only the interviewer's first name was revealed.

Particularly the higher age and position as a lecturer in higher education could have had some influence on the degree to which of the participants, all young students, were able to relax and express themselves freely. If a participant had the tendency to look up to or conversely feel a lack of respect for lecturers in general, it can be imagined that this might adversely influence the degree to which information would be given freely and accurately. In general, the impression was given that this wasn't the case however. It was felt that a reasonable level of rapport was developed with the participants.

During the longer interviews in particular, some relevant personal information from the interviewer's side was shared. For example, the fact that the interviewer migrated to the Netherlands 23 years ago was explained, in relation to the difference between now and then in terms of the ease of keeping in touch with family and friends at home. This was done for two reasons. Firstly, it helped to illustrate and contextualise the question being discussed. Secondly, it was designed to encourage an increase in the willingness of the participant to reciprocate by also sharing personal information.

3.5 Ethical issues

Participants were approached politely and respectfully. If cooperation had not been desired at any stage, refusal would have been accepted immediately. This did not occur however. The impression was not given that any of the participants felt uncomfortable with proceeding with the interview at any stage.

All participants were informed orally in advance of the precise purpose of the interview. The strong impression was gained that this was clear and considered acceptable by all. This is not too surprising, as all participants were either already higher educated, or else were about to be admitted to higher education. Such research techniques and what it involves can be expected to be well understood by such participants. No written consent form was used for this research, as it was not considered necessary in this case.

In addition, student participants were informed that their names would be anonymised. This was carried out using a coding system to replace the real names, constructed in the following way:

Table 2 – Coding system for purposes of anonymisation

Component of code				
1	B	Bachelor's	M	Master's
2	UAS	University of Applied Sciences	AU	Academic University
3 (for academic	A	Amsterdam	P	University

university participants only)				in a provincial city
4	Number of interview, in chronological order of when it was carried out			

These codes are used in the results section to identify individual participant's comments. For example, BUAS1 indicates a Bachelor's level student, at a university of applied sciences, which was the first interview carried out.

The subject matter was generally not sensitive. In most of the shorter interviews, one or more parents and sometimes other family members were present. It is possible that third parties, such as fellow students, were able to overhear interviews during a few of the Skype meetings. These could conceivably have had a minor influence on the participant's willingness to be completely honest regarding certain questions.

All participants were aged 18 or more, so there was no requirement to gain the consent of parents or guardians to participate. After acceptance of the thesis, all recordings will be destroyed.

4. Results

4.1 Introduction

Based on extensive analysis of the interviews, the following answers per sub-question outlined in 2.5 are given.

4.2 Social factors

4.2.1 Role of networks

Mirroring Bohra and Massey's (2009) concept of network migration, several participants reported that enthusiastic stories from their peer environment acted as a catalyst to start researching migration opportunities. Typically, the idea of applying was implanted in their minds, after a peer paved the way, lowering the psychological barrier to migrate. However, a motivator not previously reported in the literature is that, whilst peer networks were the facilitator, the main actual driver here often seemed to be to seek the hedonistic goal of investing in personal happiness. This was based on a desire to replicate the experience they had when physically visiting their earlier study migration peers at the same university. A similar vehicle to a visit in person is the significant influence on current master's students, during their UK bachelor's degree, of prior migrants' social media activity. This significantly raised both awareness of international study opportunities and the desire to take advantage of it themselves. There is a strong suggestion of envy being a motivator. This paved the way for more serious research into opportunities to undertake a similar experience, which ultimately lead to taking action and actually migrating.

"I didn't really think about going abroad, and then two of my friends went on Erasmus to The Hague, and they were putting pictures and posting on Facebook that they were having a great time, and I was like 'the Netherlands! I should look into that.' I knew it was cheaper but I'd never thought about it, so that was my first stage of investigation that I should look internationally." (MAUA6, 21)

"I was sitting there at work last year, and I remember (laughs) in my lunch break scrolling down my Facebook, and loads of my friends who had just graduated were kind of doing loads of things, seeing the world. So, I thought, I wanted to do something interesting too." (MAUA10, 22)

A strategy to combat the trepidation of being a young person alone in a foreign country not previously given much attention in ISM literature was to consciously recruit a fellow national friend who was prepared to migrate simultaneously together. This could be a make or break factor in terms of going ahead with the move. Initial anxiety is demonstrated of being alone

amongst foreigners, due to concern that new fellow students would avoid socialising with those of other nationalities. This tactic seems to have worked where applied, although it was only important in giving sufficient confidence during the initial pre- and post-arrival period.

Unexpectedly, in contrast to Bohra and Massey's (2009) ideas about migration network, not all migrants gave the impression of being motivated by the presence of fellow nationals at the same institution. On the contrary, they may actually be actively attracted to a place by the notion of being unique in terms of nationality in the new educational environment. This seems to appear to their sense of adventure and ability to facilitate new experiences.

“A lot of my decision ... was based on the fact that I would be the only English person there. I could have gone to The Hague, but I heard that they have a huge English population there. ... I thought if I go there I might just end up getting stuck in the same English group - a bit pointless. I'd rather be by myself, and then meet new people.” (BUAS1, 26)

4.2.2 Influence of family, friends and partners

Responses to parental opinions

Although most participants claimed that their decision was totally their own, closer analysis revealed a number of ways, some quite subtle, in which parental influence was noticeable, supporting how parental influence is noted by Meango (2014) to be important. Amongst bachelor's students in particular, parents were frequently cited as the primary initiators of orientation abroad. This stimulation took place in a variety of ways, ranging from subtle, continued persuasion “[My parents] didn't really force me, but they did really want me to [come].. They just kept saying all the good things. (BUAS5, 20), to active coercion “My mum ... kept making me look at the website.” (BUAS4, 20).

Parents who are themselves comfortable with international travel and contact appear more likely to support the move abroad. Parental enthusiasm was sometimes motivated by the desire for an excuse to visit their child in a desirable and accessible location.

“[Amsterdam] is my parents' favourite city, so they were absolutely over the moon! They have already been over quite a few times to visit, and take advantage.” (MAUA12, 24)

In contrast, the parents of BAUP15 were uneasy about their child studying abroad as it entailed being physically further away than UK universities are. They felt that this could be undesirable, as it limits the extent to which physical visits can be made. It is not clear what the concern was exactly; psychological longing to retain regular contact with child, or a perception that the child is not yet mature enough to fend for himself for long periods without regular visits home. Modern communication technology doesn't appear to be considered in this case as a tool to reduce this problem. Such resistance could act to either encourage (due to youthful reaction against such parental doubts) or discourage the would-be study migrant.

It should be noted that the lack of UK government student loans for students leaving the UK, resulting in the necessity for an alternative source of funding, which is frequently parental, can be seen to entail a greater need for parental acquiescence than with domestic study moves. Participants generally recognised that the decision to migrate could not be made alone. This is likely to promote an increased feeling of indebtedness to family, with a variety of possible psychological and behavioural outcomes.

Evidence was also seen that parents of some master's students who had worked first for a year or two after graduating with a bachelor's degree, although not willing to prevent their child from becoming a study migrant, are concerned that going to take a master's degree abroad is not a wise career move. They view it as unusual and risky. This might be justified with reference to the parents' own lack of international experience, in terms of living and travelling abroad. This seems to relate to claims made by several participants that many British people believe that foreign education is of inferior quality to British education. It may also illustrate a concern amongst parents that their child is trying to escape adult responsibilities, by playing at being a student again.

“Because [my parents] are... more traditional, ... leaving the country and going somewhere for a year, ... for them it wasn't the safest option. They would probably rather I just stay in the UK and get a job ... things like travelling or going around the country, they had never done anything like that, so I don't think they really get it They smile at the idea, but underneath they're a bit like, 'there isn't much point in doing that'.” (MAUA10, 22).

It is conceivable that this participant's decision to study abroad was partly borne out of a youthful reaction against parental distrust.

Responses to peers' opinions

As suggested by Cairns (2014), peer group enthusiasm also stimulates ISM. It can act as a driver in overcoming the barrier of anxiety regarding taking a migration decision. *“It is not like anyone else suggested it, but ... I started talking about it ... and all of my friends were so encouraging and really supportive.”(MAUA6, 21)*

In contrast, sometimes study migrants have to overcome resistance of peers. Reports of surprise and discouragement of the concept of studying abroad instead of in UK were noted. *“... some (friends) thought it was quite a big jump.”(BUAS3, 21); “My friends... couldn't really understand why I wasn't going to do it in London or something.” (MAUP9, 22).* Although this could act to decrease the chances of many to go abroad, a sufficiently independent person is conceivably motivated by the feeling of potential satisfaction generated by a successful move proving their peers wrong.

Domestic commitments prior to migration decision

A conscious recognition of lack of adult commitments in general sometimes facilitated the decision to study abroad. *“Being 22, having no mortgage to pay,*

no kids to feed, no commitments at all, ...I could basically do whatever.” (MAUA10, 22). By implication, people in the opposite situation are presumably seen as being hindered significantly in their freedom to migrate. This experienced freedom can be regarded as an unusual situation in terms of migration in general; Bailey (2004) found that it is very much the norm to have to make migration decisions taking into account needs and wishes of other family members.

In particular, being and wishing to remain in a steady relationship with a partner prior to the study migration decision presented a range of dilemmas and resultant strategies. Becoming a tied stayer (Bailey 2004) can represent a fundamental barrier for migrants in general. For the participant below, a contrast is made between, on the one hand, having a partner, leading to a stagnating lack of ambition and drive to seek new experiences; and on the other hand, being young and single, which actively drives the desire to leave home and invest in new activities.

“I think relationships would be the key thing in terms of not wanting to go abroad, which I can understand, as when I have been in relationships in the past I have felt more settled and haven’t felt the need to move or see places, but then when it comes to an end, it’s like I ... need to do a bit more with my life and see more places.” (MAUP9, 22)

In contrast, MAUA14 (25) did not see a long-term committed relationship as a major barrier to study migration, avoiding becoming a tied stayer. Modern communication technology, combined with being used to having a long-distance relationship and being able to function well independently, are how this arrangement is said to be made to work.

4.2.3 Modern ICT effects

The ubiquity of Wi-Fi in the participants’ environment means few real barriers are experienced to using modern communication media. Both the zero cost of such online communication and the immediate accessibility seem to be very important. Reinforcing Thomas and Cooke’s (2013) findings that improved ICT can stimulate migration, it is seen by some as a complete ‘game changer’ in terms of making study migration possible. The near-identical experiences regardless of location in terms of social contact and information retrieval is seen by some as reducing national boundaries, almost making it feel as if you are in the same country. Even a self-confessed ‘stayer’ who hated to be away from family and friends, and was apprehensive about leaving, was willing and able to be abroad for a year, specifically due to ease of contact. *“I would say that I am a ‘stayer’ at heart, because I like being at home. I’m like a ‘home bird’, but with my phone and the Internet and stuff it’s not a problem.”* (MAUA6, 21).

Without modern technology, particularly Skype, travel behaviour whilst abroad may well have been affected. Those who say they would have gone abroad even without modern technology tend to report that they would have travelled home more often. This supports Thomas and Cooke’s (2013) suggestion that

improved ICT, whilst facilitating movement, can paradoxically cause a reduction in total travel. For MAUA10 (22), Skype was the specific medium which made it possible to migrate and to still satisfactorily continue a long distance relationship.

The idea of study migration abroad without modern technology is regarded as a much more daunting undertaking, and some participants would not have migrated under such conditions. Admiration is shown for those who migrated abroad in the past without the support that modern communication methods offer. *"Just going with nothing!"* (MAUA10, 22). Twentieth century communication technology is seen as being inadequate to counter the feelings of isolation. Without Skype in particular, some would have felt significantly more anxious, and isolated from kith and kin at home, and they would have taken longer to settle in to the host environment. The specified preference for audio visual real-time media such as Skype or Facetime suggest that the visual component of communication is experienced as making the difference in terms of reducing feelings of homesickness. It appears to much better simulate personal contact than audio only. The minor time zone difference is also a factor. Presumably, a migration to the other side of the world would reduce the usefulness of instant spoken contact technology for this reason.

In contrast, participants who exhibited a strong sense of independence and self-reliance did not feel ICT influenced in their migration decision. This was demonstrated, for example, through a claimed lack of desire for close contact with family and friends, extensive prior international experience, or a strong compulsion to experience a foreign adventure. Modern communication was even viewed by some as a disadvantage, even if regular contact with home is desired, instead valuing traditional media. *"Writing letters is fun, you have to appreciate snail-mail."* (MAUA6, 24). Similarly, MAUA11 (23) felt constricted and stressed by modern technology, and claimed not to value its benefits *"Sometimes I just want to throw my phone in a canal!"*

4.2.4 Culture of migration

A lack of knowledge of the principle of being able to study abroad amongst British stayers is reported as being common. British people in general do not consider going abroad to study as an option, even though the tuition fees can be so much lower. As BUAS4 (20) put it, somewhat exaggeratedly, *"I don't think anybody knows - nobody thinks to leave the country and study abroad."* Others had more nuanced view, claiming that the opportunities are known about but are just not seriously considered. Bearing in mind Bohra and Massey's (2009) findings that migration was stimulated in communities in which a culture of migration existed, it can thus be hypothesised that the opposite effect is present in the UK, as there is very little evidence of a culture in which study migration is common. This can mean that some potential migrants require a boost to their confidence that studying abroad is not a strange idea. When the knowledge of the opportunities to study abroad has been obtained, for example at study fairs, this provides the necessary confidence that it was a sensible and well-trodden career path. *"I went to the*

... study fair and they were like, 'It is not that weird to go to the Netherlands really, there's people already going.'" (BAU15, 18)

4.2.5 Social factors not previously emphasised in literature

Effect on social status within peer group

A notably strong driver which has received little attention in the ISM decision-making literature is the effect of increasing social standing within the peer group by migrating to a desirable location. Several participants perceived their existing social contacts as being impressed and perhaps made jealous by evidence of exciting activities enjoyed abroad. *"My friends ... said 'What an amazing city!' and how jealous and stuff they are."* (MAUA11, 23). Social media, which in the context of this study can now be considered ubiquitous, are ideally suited to rapid visual, oral and textual dissemination of a record of such activities. Until a few years ago, a student abroad who wanted to impress their peers with stories or photos of exciting touristic or social activities in exotic locations, had to wait to a much later date to show photos and share stories. The ease of almost instantaneously being able to impress peers with desirable images and experiences makes this effect plausibly significantly more powerful than in the past.

In some cases, this emotion is strengthened by the perception of leaving an unsatisfying working life in the UK and migrating abroad to study. It seems likely that this generates personal pride, which thus could also be a motivator.

"My friends ... talk a lot about leaving the UK and they're ... stuck in their ways, working dead end jobs and they're not really planning to do much with their lives .., so they look at [me studying abroad] as being a bit different, and with admiration, and maybe also a little bit of enviousness and jealousy... ."
(BUAS1, 26)

A rewarding feeling of pleasure due to desirable social status is also generated by the fact that peers indicate willingness to visit the study migrant. The sincerity of these intentions is sometimes backed up by actual visits, thus further multiplying this effect.

"Friends [were] keen for me to come to Amsterdam, so that they could ...visit, ... The reaction is definitely quite positive ... I have had quite a few visitors coming often." (MAUA14, 25)

This effect is even greater if visiting the study migrant is consciously linked in the minds of the peers with desired hedonistic opportunities, such as facilitating visits to coffee shops.

4.3 Geographical factors

4.3.1 Effect of imagined geographies and familiarity with destination

Image of city, sense of adventure, and imagined geography

Beech's (2014) concept of imagined geographies influencing choice of study location is certainly reflected in the case of Amsterdam. A difference is that British students are usually able to physically visit the Dutch campuses before deciding, which isn't always the case with ISM over greater distances, as with Beech's (2014) study. Being a leading tourist destination, particularly accessible to and popular with young, British people, Amsterdam has little difficulty attracting sufficiently adventurous student migrants. Hedonistic values can clearly influence the choice of destination. Amsterdam attracts study migrants with its social opportunities, considered a priority by many young people. This can also be interpreted as insurance against the perceived danger of regretting a choice through it being insufficiently interesting. Most other universities in the Netherlands, many of which try to attract international students, are situated in cities much less well-known to potential British study migrants, and are considered to be less interesting. A choice was sometimes made for Amsterdam over provincial cities, despite being financially disadvantageous, specifically because of this.

On the other hand, the social attractions of Amsterdam are perceived by some as a disadvantage. Many study migrants were first aware of Amsterdam as a study destination and then compared this with other options. The perceived social opportunities of Amsterdam are seen by some as providing too many distractions and thus a hindrance to studying successfully. This is given as a specific reason for choosing a provincial city over Amsterdam to study in. This could reflect different priorities, such as successful studying, to students who sought a more active social scene. It is also conceivable that the participant was exhibiting a sense of cognitive dissonance, in justifying a less exciting choice now that it could not be reversed.

“And I quite like ... living in a small city, cause I think that if I went to uni in Amsterdam I wouldn't get a degree at all; there's too much going on, so it's nice here that it's quite secluded and peaceful for studying.”(BUAS4, 20).

The potential for too many distractions represented by Amsterdam is sometimes equated to physical size. *BAU15, 18* expresses a preference over Amsterdam for a Dutch city of similar size to the provincial home town, which is apparently felt to be the most desirable, even though a course in Amsterdam was viewed as higher quality. The provincial university town is perceived as being a more pleasant place to live.

Participants who study in Amsterdam tend to believe that the Dutch capital is more suitable for them than provincial cities in satisfying their desire to spend time in an international environment, due to its inherent international character. It was common to have already visited the city as a tourist in the

past. Moving to a provincial Dutch university town, which they hadn't visited before, was considered to be too much of a step into the unknown, and potentially less suitable for achieving the goal of a desired international, English-speaking environment. There seemed to be an unwillingness to first visit any unknown town in order to assess its suitability. Reliance on previously visited and liked destinations played a big role.

I would have had no idea what a provincial city would be like; I wouldn't know if it was a student city or maybe it was a really quiet city, you can't really gauge the feel of it if you've never been before. And I thought 'Capital city, yeah, it would be a lot more international.' So it kind of put my mind at ease a bit more.
(MAUA10, 22)

Ironically, this appears to contradict the stated desire for a true adventure. In this sense, this is very similar to Waters and Brook's (2011) 'knowable adventure' findings.

The trigger to migrate was sometimes a push-factor of reacting to a negative experience of living in the UK. An apparent combination is seen of finding your home country uninspiring and dull, married with the perception of adventure and new social opportunities facilitated by mixing with new cultures. It is also linked to a general feeling of being adventurous in nature, agreeing with Water and Brooks' (2011) conclusion that students are looking for adventure.

"I'm a bit of an explorer. Instead of staying in the same place and feeling a bit stagnated, it is quite exciting to come abroad and try new things." (BAU22, 19)

A desire for an exciting foreign adventure, in contrast to the already familiar student experience, sometimes generated the desire to follow a master's in the first place.

"I've had the UK university experience, and I had a really good time, but then I wanted to do something new, and so if I hadn't been able to come abroad then I don't really think I would have done [a master's at all]." (MAUP9, 22)

This thirst for new environments and international discovery is not without its boundaries, however. The Netherlands is considered relatively similar culturally to the UK and thus seen not to be overly daunting for migrants, in contrast to locations with extremes of cultural variation, which would be considered too risky as a study destination.

[Going to study in the Netherlands is] not like moving to Saudi Arabia or something, but at the same time it is a different country with its own quirks, and because of that it is interesting."
(MAUP7, 27)

This corresponds closely to, or “knowable” Waters and Brooks ‘ (2011) findings that student want somewhere different, but still familiar.

As referred to by Beech (2014), the institute’s own marketing via the website often has a strong influence on the migration decision. A common pattern which emerged is a multiple-step, decision-making pathway in which positive word-of mouth, course comparison websites, or media attention encouraged the student to view the university website, which in turn lead to a positive engagement with the institute at an open day visit, after which enrolment followed. The mutual interchangeability of live and virtual experiences is particularly noticeable in several cases.

Another, highly non-rational, reaction to media publicity was illustrated by MAUP7 (27), who serendipitously read an article on the destination city already in mind. This provided apparently needed psychological confirmation of the wisdom of a decision, which had essentially already been made based on more rational criteria.

“[I was intending to enrol at Utrecht.] Every time a local magazine is published, they have one article about a foreign place and one time it just happened to be Utrecht, and I thought maybe it was some kind of sign.

In one case, experiencing the physical environment in terms of the buildings clinched the decision during an open day visit to study at this Dutch institution. This stage could not have been reached unless the candidate student had been prepared to invest time and money into actually visiting the campus, during an open day.

Promotional material on its own can be sufficient for prospective students to develop a positive emotion related to the location at a distance. For example, the University of Groningen prominently displays architecturally impressive, apparently centuries’ old buildings in its study fair stand. This sense of long-established permanence is equated with trustworthiness and high quality, perhaps reflecting the higher status in the UK of ancient universities such as Oxbridge. (BAU20, 18) was encouraged to attend an open day on location after seeing this.

“We saw a big picture of the cathedral church and it looked very old. That’s what we said first, we were like, ‘it looks very old, so it must be good, it’s been around a long time.’”

Typically Dutch urban features such as canals, which you would imagine are more relevant attractions for tourists, also seem able to persuade a study migrant to seriously investigate a university further.

“The pictures looked beautiful, with a canal and everything, and the way it was described it seemed like a really nice place... so [it] came into my focus.” (MAUP7, 27).

Effect of prior visits on perceptions of destination

In general, prior knowledge of the location could be seen to significantly lower the barrier to going there, reflecting Water et al's (2011) findings. Prior knowledge of, and attraction to, the host country or city appears to encourage investment of time and effort into researching study opportunities. This can be a very direct and powerful trigger. A positive attitude based on first hand experience can be derived from one or more positively remembered visits. For example, MAUA10 (22), with the concept of lower tuition fees in mind, and with the destination already felt to be known following previous tourist and study visits, was stimulated to investigate further. He thus started to invest in the choice, increasing the chance of deciding to move. His ability to visualise the location beforehand helped make the future stay more tangible and less daunting. When at home, making the decision, his imagined geographical emotion towards the destination was very positive, based on these tangible sources.

"[Hearing of cheap tuition fees in Scandinavia] got me thinking, because I had been on a field trip to Amsterdam, and had used the tram [etc.]. So I could really visualise what it would be like, so it wasn't like I was going into the unknownand it got me thinking, 'I wonder what the tuition fees are like [in Amsterdam]?"

Knowledge of the destination does not always have to originate from the student. Parental familiarity with and knowledge of the destination can also increase the chances of going there. For example, after a father indicated interest, the son only had to demonstrate being open to the country as a study destination, and the father was ready to support this by facilitating the visit to an open day together.

An attraction to the city can be a major driver. Study migration was sometimes seen as an easier opportunity to achieve a life goal of living in the city than might perhaps present itself in the future. *"I also just love Amsterdam, I have come over here a lot with my parents... so it was just sort of a prime opportunity, and to live here as well."* (MAUA12, 24). In the same vein, the lack of a previous visit by peers who stayed at home is claimed to have the opposite effect, deterring research into the country as a study destination.

On the other hand, complete lack of knowledge of the city and the institute does not necessarily have to preclude going there. Requirements are first of all that the destination is discovered by some means, and that other important conditions, such as admissibility, sufficient financial resources, and a desired course, are all fulfilled. For MAUP7 (27), the country and city had not previously been visited, but the idea to go there had already been planted in the participant's mind, and continued to be present as a latent goal. This followed a previously planned but eventually cancelled exchange visit. This original plan was claimed to have later positively affected the decision to eventually follow a master's there.

4.3.2 Effect of English not being the country's main language

Opportunity to communicate in English in local community

As reported by Brooks and Waters (2009), the perception that it is possible to function in daily life, not just within the university context, without needing to learn a new language, is important to British students. This has, however, only previously been reported in native English-speaking host countries. The attraction of study programmes in which the language of instruction is exclusively English is obvious. Somewhat counter-intuitively however, given the presumably adventurous nature of migrant students, some participants in this study are also motivated by the perception that the living environment in the Netherlands, outside the immediate study needs, is one in which communication using English only is acceptable and achievable. This thus suggests that this phenomenon can be extended to non-native speaking countries like the Netherlands, where ability to converse satisfactorily in English is commonplace. *"It's just not being comfortable really. I can't ever really feel at home somewhere where I can't communicate competently with everyone."* (MAUP8, 26).

The Netherlands tends to be seen as one of the countries in Europe in which functioning in society using only English is feasible. Scandinavia is often seen in a similar light, whereas France or Germany tend to be named as different in this respect, in that the host population are anticipated as being poorer in English. A distinction is made between competence in English, enabling adequate communication in complex situations, and less competent ('broken') English, such as expected in France or Germany. The former is regarded as facilitating a problem-free period of study in this respect; whereas the latter is seen as being a concern for the student, in terms of inviting problems when trying to deal with administrative or similar issues. *"If you have any documents about tax ... then you could find someone [in the Netherlands] to help you sort it out quite easily."* (MAUA10, 22). This effect is likely to correspond with greater attractiveness of the Netherlands compared to most other European countries. The phenomenon appeared to be particularly apparent amongst master's students. An explanation for this might be that, despite the additional experience and maturity which can be expected amongst master's students compared to bachelor's, the shorter length of time to be spent abroad (ten months as opposed to two and a half to four years) both reflects and leads to a reduced willingness to embrace and invest in the host community in any significant way. bachelor's students, being younger and perhaps more naïve, might in addition be less anxious about the concept of a new language.

This factor of not needing to use other languages in the Netherlands as a motivator is not always celebrated by the participants. It is instead sometimes regarded as being illustrative of British cultural laziness, in terms of a lack of willingness to invest in other languages. It is, however, recognised that this is understandable, as it borne out of the situation that most Dutch people are generally confident in using English.

"It's sad in a way because people don't need to try but, realistically, if somebody wants to go away for a year to study,

they do not need to learn any Dutch, and you will be fine, English is spoken everywhere.” (MAUP7, 27)

4.3.3 Geographical actors not previously emphasised in literature

Amongst geographical factors identified, no major completely new aspects were uncovered which could not be linked to one of the existing categories in the literature above.

4.4 Psychological factors

4.4.1 International experience prior to study migration

As previously noted, Brooks and Waters (2009) found a link between prior experience of international sojourns, and a later desire to study abroad. As a corollary to this, this study found that previous international study experience is commonly linked with a desire for new international adventures. For example, the Erasmus+ programme, in which bachelor's students spend a semester at a foreign university, can lower the psychological barrier to studying abroad, and inspire students to become involved in another similar experience in the form of a foreign master's. The cultural and social capital this prior experience provides can significantly facilitate the decision to migrate again, by adding to the confidence required and also opening the student's eyes more to international opportunities.

“For the people who haven't lived abroad before, I think [studying abroad] is probably scarier Because I'd [studied abroad] before, I knew that I'd love it. (MAUP8, 26)

Similarly, already having been in a relationship with a foreigner prior to the migration decision can be indicative of being likely to feel comfortable and relaxed in international environments, preferring and being oriented towards international situations, and of some actual international experience. Together, these factors result in a much-increased chance of first of all looking at foreign study options, and then selecting them.

4.4.2 Psychological factors not previously emphasised in literature

Interest in other cultures

An initiator in becoming aware of study abroad opportunities is a claimed long-standing interest in being abroad and (renewed) contact with people from other cultures. This is not clearly reflected in current general migration and ISM decision-making theories. This phenomenon could be noted in the context of positive associations expressed with being abroad, and meeting foreign peers.

“A key point that attracted me ... was ... the idea of being able to go abroad, experience a different culture... so that eventually got into my mind that it would be nice to try that.” (MAUP9, 22)

Emotional responses to realisation of cost differential

Some students had prior knowledge of the tuition fee disparity, which could clearly be a strong rational motivator, but the realisation of the huge scale of difference could come as an extremely pleasant surprise. This excitement can seem to become a major emotional driver. The scale of the positive emotion demonstrated by MAUA6 (21), for example, when the financial situation became clear, is particularly notable.

“[Low fees were] my initial reason in looking, but I didn't realise there was going to be that much of a disparity in cost ... so I was amazed. And that was one of the biggest selling points. ... when I saw the cost I was like ‘This is amazing, this is so cheap!’ It is a huge cost difference!”

As the current British-Dutch tuition fees disparity is a very case specific situation in the field of migration, it is understandable that it has not previously been seen in the literature.

Ironically, this substantial financial benefit sometimes lead to a suspicion amongst potential migrants of hidden disadvantages. There was a deep concern that a satisfactory university course would not charge such low tuition fees. As BUAS5 (20) puts it:

“We were expecting some sort of catch, but it just never came. It was too good to be true; it was really, really cheap compared to England. ... We were expecting some hidden charge somewhere, but it's ridiculously low.”

Such an attitude is perhaps explicable when the higher education educational climate in English-speaking countries is considered. It was reported that the limited number of institutes which charge less than the maximum for tuition fees are commonly regarded as sub standard. It is widely seen as a guarantee of a university's quality that the maximum fee is charged. It is conceivable that some British young people, after possessing initial interest, are deterred from exploring study abroad opportunities further by such an inherent (emotionally-rooted) distrust of low cost study programmes.

For some participants, a general fear of making an unsuccessful choice of degree meant that the high tuition fees in the UK represented an unacceptable risk. Avoiding this by studying in the Netherlands gave relative piece of mind, and so acted as a positive psychological driver.

There is also some anger expressed at the high tuition fees in UK, not just for the influence it potentially had on the student's personal situation, but also as it is perceived as increasing the gap between the social classes. Choosing to study abroad could thus be partly motivated as feeling like some kind of political act; teaching the government and the university establishment a lesson by taking your custom elsewhere, thus promoting personal psychological well-being.

Participants sometimes differentiated between the opportunities created and limited by their own, middle-income personal financial situation, and those of better off peers who had followed private education all their lives. The point was made that if parents have been funding education anyway at a cost of several thousand Pounds throughout the primary and secondary stages of schooling, continuing to do so for another couple of years of higher education was both apparently affordable and also psychologically acceptable for both parents and child. The corollary is the case for both of these aspects for less well-off parents who are suddenly faced for the first time with the prospect of substantial funding of education for their child, thus making studying in the UK a considerably less attractive option, and increasing emotional pressure to succeed. The opportunity to follow low-cost satisfactory higher education abroad reduced this emotional pressure.

Emotional responses to recruitment procedures

The standards of organisation, particularly during the recruitment phase, within the institutions were perceived to be refreshingly better in the Netherlands compared to Britain. One parent of a prospective student, who had professional experience working at a high status UK university, experienced a major difference in the attitude to student recruitment as attractive. He sketched a contrast between the degrading British situation, in which prospective students are expected to be grateful to be awarded the privilege of attending the institution; and the more desirable student-friendly Dutch situation, in which they are seen as customers, and are welcomed as guests. The feeling being treated hospitably and respectfully acted to increase the chances of ISM to the Netherlands.

Overcoming anxiety regarding doubts about value of foreign qualifications in UK

It seems that some British students in the Netherlands had to overcome anxiety as a result of concern expressed by peers that foreign degrees are either of actual lower quality than British equivalents, or else will enjoy a lower status in the eyes of British employers. Some of these concerns were viewed by the migrants as irrational, based on stereotypical misconceptions, and a subjective view of British education being superior. *"I think British people kind of see other countries as being maybe less modern. (MAUP8, 26)*

There is a strong sense that participants claimed not to share such worries. This could be explained in several ways. Firstly, it could well be an objective judgement based on own research and experience. An alternative psychological explanation, however, is that cognitive dissonance to protect own self-esteem plays a role; there is conceivably a high barrier to admitting to others and to yourself that a major life choice made is in some way flawed.

A self-image of relative enlightenment compared to the majority of British peers can be noted. Some participants were critical of what they experienced as narrow-minded opinions about foreign education. There lies behind this something of an air of self-congratulation of having been able to rise above these misconceptions. This may lead to further accentuation of positive emotions regarding the choice of going abroad to study.

“I think quite a lot of people in England are quite insular about their education, and they can be a bit snobby as well I think. And then they generally look down on Europeans.” (BAU20, 18)

Institutions which use a student-centred educational approach, such as Problem-based Learning (PBL), are also valued for perceived benefits of a more individually oriented educational environment. Students contrast this with the expectation of the conventional, large-scale lecture-based system in the UK. BUAS4's (20) response, rooted in a positive emotion, to learning of the institute's claimed personal attention and international approach was that she decided not to investigate any further options and immediately enrolled.

Emotional response to easier admission

The existing literature does not identify perceived variations in admission standards as playing a role in location choice. Here, however, this did seem to be a factor of note. There is a strong perception that Dutch universities generally require lower evidence of prior educational achievement for admission than their British counterparts. This can clearly be a reason for British students who can't gain access to a course of choice in the UK to choose the Netherlands instead. Although this is ostensibly a rationally based motivation, some participants were clearly pleasantly surprised and motivated that their secondary education grades allowed them access to apparently better institutes and more desirable courses in the Netherlands than in the UK. They perceived this as an unexpected second chance, which not only made following a degree course possible, but also contributed to a general positive feeling regarding studying. This may plausibly have acted as an extra stimulant to decide to go ahead with the migration.

For two years [after leaving school] I was thinking ‘Oh, I’m pretty stupid, I can’t go to university’, until I found out about [this university of applied sciences], which of course has entry barriers, but I met them, so I thought ‘Hey, you know what, actually, I can go to university’.” (BUAS3, 21)

Anxiety of risk of missing out on an opportunity

Some master's students actively identify the chance to study abroad at this stage in their life as being a temporary opportunity, which if not taken would be regretted for the rest of their lives. The fear is of missing out now on a chance for exciting new personal discoveries in a new environment. This is compared with the dull predictability of conventional career paths. The implication is that such ordinary jobs might well be taken in the future, but that by migrating they have avoided the risk of living a life full of regret and perhaps some kind of future mid-life crisis.

“I had decided I don't want to be in England much more, and wanted see something new and test myself. I didn't want to look back when I'm 40 or something and just be like ‘Ah crap, I had the chance to go abroad and study’ and that is a really unique opportunity, and it's really easy to do now. I didn't want to look back and have just moved to London and got a crap job in recruitment or something.” (MAUA11, 23)

It was also common for master's students to already possess a feeling of making up now for missed opportunities in the past. Many opined that they regretted not spending part of their bachelor's degree abroad as part of an Erasmus programme, which they didn't do for some reason. They felt that doing a master's abroad represented something of a second chance to experience a youthful adventure.

"I wanted to do my third year of my bachelor's abroad, ..., but it never really came to fruition. So that was another reason as to why I was so desperate to do my master's abroad, because I wanted to live abroad. For the adventure." (MAUA6, 21).

"I had the opportunity to do Erasmus and the year abroad, but I was in a relationship at the time and I didn't really capitalise on all those other opportunities I had, and obviously I regretted it." (MAUP7, 27)

Ability to deal with homesickness

Missing family, friends and home is clearly a potential reason for a student to decide not to study abroad. The participants had all found solutions to overcome this, or else did not feel it to be too large an obstacle. The ability to function and survive independently is commonly claimed as a characteristic which facilitates this. The apparent boost to self-esteem was also noted stemming from a feeling of pride in being considered by parents to be a child who is willing and able to take the step of living abroad. Understanding is demonstrated for the decision of less-adventurous peers to stay in the UK, due to feeling isolated from familiar people and places.

Willingness to deviate from conventional career choices

Participants frequently gave the impression of self-satisfaction at having successfully made the effort to have broken away from their British peers' more conventional educational career pathways. Some combination of peer pressure not to break out of the conventional pathways; habit; the absence of knowledge of foreign alternatives; and a lack of interest in being abroad were proffered as explanations for their peers' decision to stay.

"I think when we left school we all wanted to stay together, we were so used to being all together, that a lot of people just were ... stuck in a routine..." (BUAS3, 21)

British peers are often viewed by migrants as somewhat lazy, displaying an unwillingness to deviate from the conventional life choices, resulting in not even becoming aware of study migration opportunities. There is a sense of personal satisfaction of having a significantly different outlook on life to peers who don't want to study abroad.

"When I introduced the idea to my friends, they couldn't really understand why I wasn't going to do [a master's] in London or something, and... I feel like I've got a very different mentality to

them, that that option wasn't ever on the table [for them].”(MAUP9, 22)

4.5 Conclusions

In conclusion, discounting the many rational determinants not discussed in this study, British students appear to go to study in the Netherlands for a complex and varied set of emotionally oriented reasons. Many of these determinants broadly correspond with those found in earlier research into international study migration, but a number of previously-underemphasised motivators were also found in this study. These differences could be due to unique characteristics of this particular migration pathway, or to differences in the method of research used.

5. Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore emotionally oriented factors affecting the decision of young Britons to migrate to follow bachelor's or master's degrees in the Netherlands. A wide range of such factors was encountered. Many of these correspond with, and sometimes add new insights to, the concepts identified in the existing general migration and ISM decision-making literature. These are summarised first in each of the three sections. An additional aim was to identify and describe ways in which the current theory could be expanded or adapted for this specific ISM pathway. A significant number of such aspects were found, and are summarised and discussed at the end of each of the three sections below.

5.1 Social factors

5.1.1 Role of networks

Following the literature review, the first question posed was how do British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands experience the link between themselves and any fellow national peers they know who had or have already made the same study migration. Building on Beech's (2014) findings regarding word-of-mouth promotion, the emotion of jealousy of the apparently exciting adventures prior study migrants are experiencing is seen to have a potentially strong influence in triggering interest in replicating the study migration. The increasing power of social media has undoubtedly multiplied the strength and immediacy of this effect compared to pre-Internet times.

More unexpectedly, in contrast to Bohra & Massey (2009), the specific lack, rather than existence, of fellow nationals at a university can act as a motivator for pioneering independent migrants, who aspire to generate their own unique social experiences.

5.1.2 Influence of family, friends and partners

The second question was how do British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands perceive the influence of family ties and relationships on their migration decision? No significant new insights were made regarding family influence. The findings generally supported authors such as Raghuram (2013) in highlighting the role of family in the decision-making. However, contrary to Cairns (2014), disapproval of the migration idea by stay at home peers was counter-intuitively noted to sometimes increase the desire to migrate. This may be due to ISM being experienced as a challenge, with increased self-esteem generated by proving doubters amongst kith and kin wrong.

5.1.3 Modern ICT effects

The third question was how do British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands feel about the effect of modern communication technology on their ISM decision? An extension to Thomas and Cooke (2013) was the claim that the place-independent identical usage facilitated by modern digital communication media means that migration is not only easier, but that the experience of being abroad essentially is not experienced as any different to being in your own country.

More specifically, although text-based social media are highly valued, a sense was given that the visual component in particular of communication media such as Skype facilitates less independent persons to feel comfortable migrating, more so than for audio-only media.

5.1.4 Culture of migration

The fourth question was how do British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands describe themselves in relation to the low-migration culture in their places of origin? This study suggested that Bohra and Massey's (2009) concept that communities in which a culture of migration stimulates new migration may be reversed in societies with low migration rates. The fact that very few British students consider or carry out a study migration tends to perpetuate this non-migrational behaviour. Reassurance of some potential migrants is needed, before they take the decision to go, that studying in the Netherlands is feasible and not reckless.

5.1.5 Social factors not previously emphasised in literature

Finally, concerning social factors, the question was posed as to how British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands are affected by social factors in ways not previously reported in the existing literature? An apparently new potential study migration motivator is the increased social standing achieved by being seen by British peers to study in an appealing foreign location. This effect is magnified by the transparency of social media, and can generate a strong feeling of pride in the migrant. That the location is convenient for hedonistically oriented social visits further intensifies the increased social status.

5.2 Geographical factors

5.2.1 Effect of imagined geographies and familiarity with destination

The question was asked as to how do British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands feel about coming to the Netherlands in terms of imagined geographies, familiarity with the destination, and prior travel experience? Unsurprisingly, a sense of going to an exciting, vibrant capital city is a strong attracting feature for migrants who chose to study in Amsterdam. Slightly less obviously, Amsterdam is perceived by some as the only Dutch city which is guaranteed to meet their requirements of living in a truly international environment. A reluctance to investigate other Dutch cities was found, due to a suspicion that this would not be worth the effort, as such provincial cities were anticipated not to be sufficiently international.

Another new concept is that positive features of Dutch cities which might be imagined as being more relevant to tourists, such as attractive canals and streets, also seemed to play a stimulating role with some study migrants. In addition, use of historic-looking buildings in the university promotional material can provide confidence in the trustworthiness and quality of an institution, regardless of its actual academic status.

5.2.2 Effect of English not being the country's main language

Secondly, concerning geographical factors, how do British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands experience coming to a country, such as the Netherlands, in which English is not the main language? Brooks and Waters (2009)

find that British students are reluctant to go to study in a non-English speaking country, as they fear not being able to cope in difficult situations. This study suggests a possible extension of this concept to a differentiation between the Netherlands, where study migrants feel the locals' level of English is high enough for them to feel comfortable; and other European countries, such as France and Germany, where they expect it is not.

5.2.3 Geographical factors not previously emphasised in literature

Finally for geographical factors, it was wondered how British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands are affected by geographical factors in ways not previously reported in the existing literature? No new insights were found in this area.

5.3 Psychological factors

5.3.1 International experience prior to study migration

Regarding psychological factors, the question was asked as to how do British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands feel their study migration was affected by prior foreign travel experience? Brooks and Waters' (2009) finding that prior experience of living abroad stimulates study migration is echoed here. A specific instrument found for this is that having taken part in an Erasmus exchange during their bachelor's was a common catalyst for master's students.

5.3.2 Psychological factors not previously emphasised in literature

Finally, how are British degree-mobile study migrants in the Netherlands affected by psychological factors in ways not previously emphasised in the existing literature? A large number of new insights were identified.

Firstly, a predisposition to contact with people of other nationalities and cultures is a finding in this study. In some cases it was claimed here as acting as the initial trigger to consider a study migration; in others it was merely a secondary factor.

Secondly, a number of interesting emotional responses which act to stimulate a decision to migrate are related to the large cost differential between British and Dutch tuition fees. It is unsurprising that these effects have not been reported in other studies, as this situation is rather unusual in terms of the financial dynamics involved in this pathway. One of these is that the extreme delight upon unexpectedly learning of the true extent of the financial disparity may be capable of driving the decision. In addition, anger at the British government and universities' high tuition fee policy can translate into a positive feeling of making a strong political statement by moving abroad to study. Next, an avoidance by migrating of the psychological barrier of having to start paying large amounts for education. This is in contrast to the experience for most Britons of having received free state education up to the end of secondary school. Finally, avoidance of the anxiety caused by having to choose a degree course which might not turn out to be suitable for that student, and which thus represents a high financial risk, can be a driver.

On the other hand, an unexpected conclusion was that the low fee in the Netherlands can create suspicion amongst British people as to the quality of Dutch universities. This interpretation can be explained by taking into account the pricing

psychology regarding the tuition fee levels in Britain. A fee set at under the maximum allowed is widely equated with cut-price, lower quality education. It is plausible that this fear discourages some would-be migrants to the Netherlands.

A positive emotion resulted where applicants to Dutch universities felt better treated and more hospitably received than in Britain. This can act to stimulate enrolment in the Netherlands. Another positive emotional response seen was the feeling of gratitude after having been given a second chance to study. This was caused by the generally lower admission levels required in the Netherlands.

Specifically amongst master's students, fear of experiencing a mid-life crisis when older also stimulated those with adventurous ambitions to take the chance of a foreign study adventure now, before being restricted by family and career obligations. In addition, an anticipated sense of satisfaction resulting from having had the willingness to deviate from the conventional life choices made by their peers, seemed to have motivated some.

5.4 Overall contribution to field of ISM

Initial informal pre-research had suggested that asking a selection of British students in the Netherlands why they chose to migrate to study there would produce a wide range of answers, which would be difficult to draw conclusions from. This turned out to be true to an extent, but in-depth analysis did eventually produce results of interest from the data, in terms of valuable new insights into the possible motivations of these study migrants. A general conclusion is that the drivers which motivate this group of students frequently correspond with existing theories on general and ISM decision making, but that some unexpected new insights were gained.

As ISM continues to grow in size and social and economic importance, it can be expected to receive increasing academic attention. This study was clearly of potential interest in that it looked into a previously unresearched, but potentially important, specific ISM pathway. This pathway is unusual in that it represents a rich-to-rich country movement, in which there is a strong financial incentive to migrate, with few obvious barriers, but with surprisingly few actual migrants. Understanding how students did choose to migrate is thus of significant interest.

Perhaps the most striking new insight into contemporary ISM decision-making to be revealed here is the intensifying role of social media in fuelling jealousy and increasing social standing between stayers and migrants. This has until now not been emphasised as a significant determinant of ISM. For it to be present, it requires problem-free Internet access in both the origin and host country. Secondly, it is helpful to understand the revealed extent to which the visual component of modern communication technologies facilitate the migration of those who would otherwise have stayed at home. This contributes to the concept of place elasticity. Thirdly, it is valuable to note that native English speakers may not necessarily feel comfortable migrating only to other native English speaking countries, but also to other countries whose population speak good English. Finally, as a contribution to the understanding of push-pull financial disparities, the concept that British students tend to equate the level of tuition fees with quality is useful to grasp.

A logical continuation of this research, in order to gain a clearer picture of this migration pathway, would be to carry out a more extensive quantitative survey of a large number of these students. The new factors and drivers identified here could then be taken into account in the question design in order to increase the chance of offering all likely motivators as options to respondents.

5.5 Reflection on research process

Looking back on the research decisions now, it can be concluded that choosing this qualitative method was wise. Not only was it enlightening to understand the feelings behind these ISM decisions better, it was not realistic to have had a sufficient number of questionnaires completed. Gaining sufficient rapport with the participants was not difficult, and they appeared to enjoy sharing their personal stories with someone with a similar background.

It is clear, however, that asking a simple, open question such as how somebody came to make an ISM decision can produce an inconveniently broad range of varying answers and reasons. It was hoped beforehand to be able to identify typical recurring patterns and types of migrant, but this proved not to be reflected in the data created. In practice, it was quite challenging to draw convincing overall conclusions. Having said that, the subject matter did lend itself quite well to being compared to existing theories and concepts in order to identify what had been noted previously and what might be new or different in some way. This was the eventual approach used, and is reflected in the final conclusions.

The breadth of the data generated lead to difficulties in sufficiently narrowing down the reporting of results and conclusions. It was initially intended to cover and analyse not only the emotional factors found but also the rational factors, such as financial and logistical benefits. This would however have represented the production of roughly double the amount of results, so became simply too unwieldy and inconvenient. The decision was thus made to ignore all determinants related to rational factors, and to use only the emotional ones. The discarded rational factors could be used in the future if desired as data for additional research on this pathway.

It was also a challenge to seek and find data in the interviews at a sufficiently high enough level to justify the use of qualitative methodology. Answers containing mainly a listing of reasons would be far better incorporated into a quantitative study. The added value of these qualitative interviews came when underlying reasoning and feelings could be identified. An example of where this was the case was in that a clear picture was found of how both jealousy of prior study migrants and increased social standing amongst peers back home are mechanisms for ISM, coupled with the insight that social media has intensified this effect.

Looking back, it can be concluded that there were moments during the interviews when probing follow up questions should have been used more often. For example, it still is not clear why the parent of BAUP15 was uneasy about her son studying a long way from home. An appropriate follow up question ('why exactly?') would have

reduced the likelihood of this being the case. Not doing this sufficiently was mainly due to lack of experience on the part of the interviewer.

It is also clear that asking only those students who had actively made the study migration successfully provides just part of the picture. A fuller view would have been obtained by researching the barriers and arguments for not migrating of the much larger group who either stay in the UK or migrate to a different country to study.

5.6 Consequences for policymakers

It was the intention of this thesis to contribute to the academic discourse on ISM decision-making, and not directly to actual policy strategies by actors in the Dutch higher education industry. Nevertheless, it seems only logical here to mention whether any of the findings are of use to Dutch universities, and particularly to their marketing departments. A casual reading of the part of the websites several Dutch universities dedicate to attracting foreign students suggests that two of the new insights seen in this study could be beneficially incorporated in their marketing efforts when targeting British students in particular. These are to explain clearly in promotional documents why:

1. tuition fees can be so low (due essentially to government subsidy), and that this is no reflection on the quality of education offered. This relates back to the finding via shadow data that, due to the British university pricing system, British students are used to equating low tuition fees with less desirable courses and institutions. Once they understand that this does not apply in the Netherlands, this potential barrier to trusting the quality would be removed, and ISM would be more likely.
2. it is possible to employ lower admission grade levels, without this having a detrimental effect on graduate quality. This is due to a radically different educational policy, in which Dutch students, rather than be heavily filtered out at entrance as in the UK, have to work harder to be allowed to progress through a course and eventually graduate. Once again, shadow data in this study suggests that British students may be surprised that they can enter university in the Netherlands with substantially lower grades than in the UK. This can easily lead to an assumption that the overall level required is also lower. If it is clear to them that this is not the case, there is more chance that they will trust in the course quality, thus stimulating suitable students to study in the Netherlands.

5.7 Personal reflection

This thesis was an enjoyable learning process for me. I was able to apply a large number of existing skills, but I also attempted several new techniques. Sometimes this led to me spending a significant amount of time over-focussing on completing a particular stage extremely thoroughly, when a more experienced researcher might have tried it out and then discarded it quickly, when it became apparent that it was not a suitable avenue of analysis in this case. For example, I spent about three days

of study analysing and comparing individual student transcripts, looking for general patterns and standard ISM profiles, before finally concluding that this was not sufficiently fruitful a method to be used. Atlas TI was stimulating to work with and understand, but once I had input all the data into it, I found it too unwieldy to actually use it for modelling purposes, due mainly to the sheer quantity of data. I thus discarded it in favour of a traditional manual pen and paper approach.

I have enormously enjoyed the challenge of focussing on one major research topic and investigating it in great detail. I hope to continue with similar research activities in the future.

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6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1 – Interview guide

Can be carried out face-to-face, or via telephone/Skype. Will be recorded, and notes will also be taken.

Preamble and relevance check

“My name is Alastair and I am currently surveying British students in the Netherlands for my master’s dissertation in Cultural Geography. There is absolutely no commercial aspect to my research. May I ask you a few questions about the choices you made regarding your studies?”

:(all/most of childhood in UK? Only continue if yes. If no, then thank for time.)

“Everything you tell me will be treated confidentially, and I will change any names and other details I know so that you can’t be identified by others. I would like to record this interview for transcription purposes. Is that acceptable? Do you have any questions for me before I begin? “

Background information

No. of interview?

First name?

Gender?

Age?

At which university currently studying?

Current degree course and level?

When started studying there?

Previous courses followed (if so: what, where, when, why stopped)?

Opening questions – home background

Parental address (county)?

Describe where grew up as urban, suburban, rural, or no clear answer?

Compared to the UK population in general, financial background wealthier than average, about average, or less wealthy than average?

Key questions about the interviewee

**Describe how you arrived at the decision to study:
in the Netherlands? at this university?**

Possible prompts if not mentioned:

- Personal Dutch connections already?
- Influenced by opinions of others (family, friends, (social) media)?
- How family/friends felt about you coming here?
- Technology means can stay in touch?
- Knew that some British students already here?
- Knew that programmes in English?
- Knew about low tuition fees?
- Knew UK student loans not available in NL?

Before you came to NL, **what did you expect it would be like to study in NL?**

How studying in NL experienced now? Differences with above?

To what extent financial aspect a barrier? If it was, how did you overcome this to be able to study here?

Considered studying at any other universities and countries? If so, which, and what affected choices? If not, why not?

If you could turn the clock back, **would you have made a different choice**, considering what you know now? If so, why and what?

Key questions about others

What can you tell me about how friends of yours made their decision as to whether to study abroad/in NL or not? Generalisations? Specific cases?

If you were a marketer at a Dutch university, **what aspects of studying here would you promote to attract more British students?**

What is your reaction to the following statement? The opportunity to study in the Netherlands, with its low tuition fees, potentially helps British students from poorer backgrounds to be able to afford to study.

Closing questions

Have you got anything else which is relevant to this research which you would like to tell me?

Do you have any friends who considered studying abroad (and eventually did or didn't)? If so, do you think they would mind me approaching them with the same questions I have asked you? If so, how can I contact them?

Thank you for your time.

6.2 Appendix 2 – Full anonymised transcripts

Background information

No. of interview? 1

Gender? M

First name? BUAS1

Age? 26

At which university currently studying? Stenden

Current degree course and level? Bachelors MEM

When started studying there? S2011

Previous courses followed? None

Opening questions – home background

Parental address (county)? Devon

Describe where grew up as urban, suburban, rural, or no clear answer? Suburban

Compared to the UK population in general, financial background wealthier than average, about average, or less wealthy than average? Average

Transcription starts at 1.00 min

Describe how you arrived at the decision to study: in the Netherlands? at this university?

It's quite a long story really. At the time when I was applying, Stenden didn't do any marketing, so I'd never even heard of the school. I had an ex-girlfriend from Germany and she heard about Stenden and it seemed like a mutual ground for both of us. Close to her home and my home, studying in English, cheaper than the UK and just a nicer experience than living at home. So that was pretty much my reasoning.

How family/friends felt about you coming here?

My family were very supportive. I guess they never expected me to go to university cause I was taking my sweet time about it. My friends I guess they were all really supportive; a lot of them think they look at it with a bit of admiration. They talk a lot about leaving the UK and they're generally kind of stuck in their ways, working dead end jobs and they're not really planning to do much with their lives outside of the UK, so they look at it as being a bit different and with admiration and maybe also a little bit of enviousness and jealousy and er quite supportive.

Did modern technology make it easier to go to a different country?

Er, I suppose so. Travelling is much more accessible, partly because of the Internet and because of the ability to be able to fly wherever you go. If I was going to be in the same situation 30 or 40 years ago I'm not sure I would do it so readily, but I think that nowadays the fact that you have Skype and Internet and Facebook and everything, it keeps you closer to home, uhm, but I'm not too bothered about having such close ties to my family and friends at home; I'm quite an independent person. I don't really rely too much on contacts with them...(inaudible)...but yeah, obviously technology helps with that kind of thing.

Before you thought about going to the Netherlands did you know about the low tuition fees?

At the time I was applying (2011) tuition fees in the UK were still at around 3000 Pounds, and for that year I would have got the lower fees and they would have gone up the next

year, but it was still a choice that I had to make because at the time I applied to Stenden I was paying 1700 Euros so it was about half price, you know? So that was definitely a factor for me.

Was it a factor that UK student loans not available in NL?

I had done some research and I just thought okay, I can get a student loan from Holland; it's not going to be a problem at all. I just knew that I had to get a job and contribute my tax money to the economy to get a student loan, and when I arrived I had a bit of a shock when it was harder to find a job than I thought, but I did quite quickly anyway, I was very lucky with that. Without that I would have had to return back to England, I think. Yeah, it was a bit hit and miss really.

Before you came to NL, what did you expect it would be like to study in NL?

I expected it would be a very, very high quality of education. Very technologically advanced, very international, students from all over the place, very sociable kind of environment. That's about all my expectations, I mean I didn't know exactly what to expect; I was quite happy to leave things to an element of surprise (giggles).

And the reality when you arrived?

I was, to be honest, a little bit disappointed with the fact that the course I had chosen wasn't as practical as I had expected it to be. I think that was partly down to the marketing at Stenden; they made it sound like a very, very practical course. It turned out to be very theoretical, but it did largely live up to my expectations; the school had great facilities. We didn't necessarily get to use them a huge amount or as much as I would have liked to. They have a music studio, they have a TV studio, and they have a learning company, so that very much lived up to my expectations.

Did you consider studying at any other universities and countries?

I applied at a number of other universities back in England. Some of them were universities; some of them were more colleges, more like a foundation degree kind of thing, because I didn't have a huge amount of UKAS points, um, so I was looking into that, and I got accepted at 4 or 5 places, and I just decided to go to Stenden cause it seemed much more attractive to me. The other option I would be thinking of would be Germany. At the time I was learning German, but my language wasn't very developed so I thought that that would be a bad idea. Those were my only other alternative options.

If there had been a suitable English language programme in Germany, then would you have chosen that perhaps?

Um, it's highly likely yeah, um, they often have even cheaper education than in the Netherlands. Because I was together with my ex at that time, she would have liked to have lived in Germany, preferably, and that might have affected our decision. But also the fact that I could do an applied course in the Netherlands made a big difference and I know that a lot of the educations in Germany are very standardised, like economics and mathematics and things like that. I'm not sure, I didn't do that much research about it; I think it would have been a possibility, it's hard to say. I would have found something, definitely.

If you could turn the clock back, would you have made a different choice, considering what you know now?

No, not at all.

What can you tell me about how friends of yours made their decision as to whether to study abroad/in NL or not?

Of my friend group, actually, I don't know of many people who have been to university. When I finished high school, a lot of my friends even didn't finish their A levels; they just went into apprenticeships with the first jobs they could find. By the time I enrolled at

Stenden I had taken 6 or 7 years off, and at that point everyone had gone their own ways and there weren't many people left around, so it's hard to comment on that really.

If you were a marketer at a Dutch university, what aspects of studying here would you promote to attract more British students?

The costs, definitely. The fact that it's much cheaper, and also the fact that it's very internationalised. I think a lot of English people will appreciate that fact, although you have international universities in England as well, the Netherlands goes above and beyond what the UK can offer in that respect. Not sure if that's true, it's just my feeling (laughs). And just emphasising the fact that it's getting out of England, because I know a lot of people of people at home they...there are two groups, people who never planned ever leaving the UK and they are quite content staying there, and then there are also those who really make a conscious effort to leave the UK. So that's one thing I would pick up on, they are excited about broadening their horizons, abroad, then there is no greater choice. That's what I'd try and put across to them.

What is your reaction to the following statement? The opportunity to study in the Netherlands, with its low tuition fees, potentially helps British students from poorer backgrounds to be able to afford to study.

I would very much agree with that. Yeah, especially nowadays with the tuition fees which have gone sky high. I'd agree to the extent that not even people from poorer backgrounds, but just the average person; I think it's a big plus. I think it's a huge factor; the prices in the UK, I think it's hugely ridiculous how much they are charging. It's only increasing the separation between the upper and middle class even more than was already there.

Have you got anything else which is relevant to this research which you would like to tell me?

Maybe actually, more and more, as time goes on, I keep thinking that my initial judgements of the school were a little bit too harsh, and that I value the education more and more as time goes on. And especially my first year, and my second year, as time went on, I feel that I was very negative about everything at first; I might have been a bit naïve to think that I could have got something better elsewhere, and nowadays I am happy to admit that I was wrong with a lot of that stuff and though there's a few things I wasn't happy with, about the education, but all in all I had a very good experience from the whole thing.

To be honest, a lot of my decision to go to Stenden was based on the fact that I would be the only English person there. I could have gone to The Hague, but I heard that they have a huge English population there. Besides from the course not being what I wanted, I thought if I go there I might just end up getting stuck in the same English group, a bit pointless. I'd rather be by myself and then meet new people, you know.

End of transcript

Background information

No. of interview? 2

BUAS2

Gender? M

First name?

Age? 22

At which university currently studying? Stenden

Current degree course and level? IHM

When started studying there? S12

Previous courses followed (if so: what ,where, when, why stopped)? None

Parental address (county)? Gloucestershire

Describe where grew up as urban, suburban, rural, or no clear answer?

Rural

Compared to the UK population in general, financial background wealthier than average, about average, or less wealthy than average? Wealthier than average

Transcription starts at 4 min 34 sec.

Please could you describe how you arrived at the decision to study in the Netherlands.

I did a lot of research into different universities in the UK to start with. For applying to UCAS I needed a minimum of five, so I chose five. I looked into the website, I didn't actually go to their open days for the different universities in the UK and I found that there was a lot of places where it is theory based; actually all of them are theory based; I didn't find any of them to have practical.

I noticed when I was studying in college that there were a lot of universities in Europe especially where they offer their students to work and to study at the same time and I think I am more attracted to those where I could work while studying, cause university is quite a long process, three or four years, and not having experience I think it gives me an advantage over the other students and that's how I came to do my research into the different universities.

First I just looked at Google cause that's just like the easiest place to find. There were a lot of universities in Switzerland, and also Greece surprisingly, and the Netherlands. And I think I was more attracted to the Switzerland ones and also Stenden. I don't think I was attracted to any of the other ones. I think these two places, was where I was impressed by the most, and there was this event at the Emirates Stadium in London where they have the universities from around the world, the Study Abroad Fair, so I went to the Stenden booth, and also I think I can't remember how many weeks after that I went to the open day in Stenden, so I flew here with my father and just looked around. I was quite impressed with the facilities they have. That's probably the main reasons.

And I looked at the costs as well. When I compared the universities I wanted to go to in Switzerland and also over here, the costs over here is incredibly low, and also when you compare it to the UK, cause this is the year when they increased the price. The year before it was only three thousand Pounds a year tuition and in my year it was nine thousand Pounds so that's triple the year, and when I look at it over here it's 1800 Euros so 1500 Pounds, it was nothing, and also accommodation is cheaper. Overall living costs are cheaper.

Did you know that beforehand, or you found that?

Yeah, I just looked into it. When we were here for the open day as well we just go to the supermarket just try to see how much everything is and also look at the accommodation, cause in the UK accommodation is also quite expensive when I looked at the different universities, so now I have those two main points as my I don't know attractive points as going here for university versus the practical aspects and also the cost aspects.

Personal Dutch connections already?

No.

Were you influenced by opinions of others (family, friends?)

I think I was slightly influenced by my parents. Also when I looked into Stenden they have many campuses around the world. That's also another aspect that attracted me, because it gives me the opportunity to travel and also to study at the same time. So there's a lot of things going on, so there's experience, there's travel.....

So you mean the exchange particularly?

Not only the exchange, I was originally attracted to the Grand Tour, cause Bali was in there, and my mother is from Indonesia so I also liked going to Bali when we lived in Indonesia we visited Bali quite a lot, and I liked to study in Bali but then when I looked at, I only came to learn about the exchange when I came here, when I started looking to studying abroad. That's when I found out about all the other exchange destinations and I was attracted to South Korea cause that was a country where I had never been before, and that was interesting.

That sounds like you discussed it a bit with your parents; it was mainly your decision, but...

Yeah, I have to discuss it with my parents cause when I looked into the funding, you can't really find any funding for UK students when you're studying over here.

So you needed their backing....

Yeah, if I want to study here I would have to have my parents' backing

How family felt about you coming here?

I think they prefer that I come here. I don't think that they want me to go into a large debt before I even start working. They even encouraged my younger sister to come to the Netherlands instead of going to the UK, after experiencing what I have experienced.

So they were positive. Has she done that?

No, she's in Northampton now (laughs).

And how do your friends in the UK feel about you coming here?

Ah, I think they like that I'm here, cause they've visited a few times.

But when you said you were going?

At the time, everyone was going anywhere; some people were going to Exeter, some were going to London, some to Leeds, some to Wales, so everywhere around the country.

But they all stayed in the UK?

They did. They thought I was quite brave that I was going to another country. But that's about it. Other than that it's excitement, cause they want to come and visit, and it's not far, especially from Bristol Airport, cause that's near where my friends are based basically, it's quite close to that, we just fly to Schiphol, and then take the train, it's really easy. It's even closer to some of my friends; when I visit them from Bristol it takes four hours to go up north or something, so it's really simple.

To what extent does technology means can stay in touch?

(hesitant) I think so. It really does, especially transport wise, cause now I can do everything on my phone. I book my flights on my phone, and then I look at the train times on my phone. I think that my phone is my best companion.

Did you know that some British students already here?

I didn't know any.

So you had done the research, you knew that there were programmes in English, knew about low tuition fees, and you knew that UK student loans were not available in NL, and so you just took all of that into account?

Yes.

Before you came to NL, what did you expect it would be like to study in NL?

Ah, that's an interesting one. I didn't really have certain expectations as such to begin with, because I had never entered university before, but maybe the first year; I've heard that the first year for British universities, cause in college I have friends who went to university before I did cause they were a year ahead, and they always say that the first year doesn't count towards anything and is basically just a social year and my parents also said that when they went to university that it's only just drinking for a year, haha, and that's it. But here, it's different when I came here; it was quite hard work; a lot of people failed the first year, and that's maybe unheard of in the UK.

So you experienced that when you came here, but you didn't really know that before?

Oh, I didn't know that it was going to be loads of tough hard work in the first year, and that it counts towards something. Cause what I knew was that the first year didn't count.

That's what you expected, because of the British experiences?

Yeah.

So that was the main difference between expectations and after arrival?

Yeah.

So concerning financial aspects, it's basically because your parents are able to fund you?

Yeah, I think I'm lucky in that respect.

Yes, but obviously it helps that tuition fees are low here; that makes it possible I guess?

Yes, I think so.

And if you'd stayed in the UK then you would have funded yourself perhaps but taken out a loan, which could have been a problem, or maybe your parents have helped out?

Uh, I think it would have been a combination of both, cause that's what's happening with my sister right now. She's taken out a loan for her tuition and then also for living my parents are funding her. So I think for tuition I would have needed to have taken out a loan.

So you told me about the different universities you looked at, so that was clear.

Yes, I had seen that Greece was an option, but I was never really attracted to there.

Yes, and Switzerland is world famous isn't it, with Netherlands the second most well-known country for the hotels schools isn't it. Was the problem with the Swiss schools mainly the costs there?

Uh, the costs, I think so, yeah. It was higher tuition, I think it was 20,000 Dollars; I can't even really remember, maybe it was 15,000, and also living costs are higher as well.

If you could turn the clock back, would you have made a different choice, considering what you know now?

Definitely not.

Did any friends of yours think about studying abroad/ in NL?

I don't think so. Cause I've talked to them about it, and they're happy with the university choices they made. I think they like to go abroad just to visit me, to go on holiday, but I don't think they want to study there.

Why?

They've never actually said anything about it, so I can't speak for them, but maybe because they find it different; outside of their comfort zone.

Too scary maybe?

I think so.

It's funny that, isn't it? I mean you looked around and said 'hey this is a good deal', but the vast majority of people still even with the high tuition fees they think it's not for them.

They just stay in the UK. They just complain about it, but they don't choose any other options. Cause I remember even my college we went to go on 'strike' in the town centre, cause everybody was angry about the high tuition fees, but all my friends ended up going to university in the UK anyway.

If you were a marketeer at a Dutch university, what aspects of studying here would you promote to attract more British students?

I think I would promote the aspects that attracted me to come here, like the experience, the travel, the cost – those three things.

You think that if more British students knew about it, that would attract some of them?

Yeah, I would definitely say so.

What is your reaction to the following statement? The opportunity to study in the Netherlands, with its low tuition fees, potentially helps British students from poorer backgrounds to be able to afford to study.

Um, usually people from poor backgrounds they get a grant if they go to university in the UK because their parents won't be able to fund all their extra things, cause usually a loan is not enough to go to university these days, so you need some help from your parents. I see that with my sister as well; she gets a loan but she still needs money from my parents. And then for poorer families, they would get a grant to help instead of their parents having to do that. So coming here, what I notice is that you don't get any financial help from the government; you don't get a loan. I think you could a loan from the bank but that would be different, but I didn't look into doing that.

Is it possible that it would help British students from say average backgrounds to be able to afford to study?

Mm, I think, yes, if they get the support, but I don't think that people from poorer backgrounds would be able to come here. Just cause it's cheaper, but if there is no funding available then it won't be possible.

Have you got anything else which is relevant to this research which you would like to tell me?

Ah, I can't think of anything really.

Transcription ends at 23 min 10 sec.

Background information

No. of interview? 3
BUAS3

Gender? F

First name?

Age? 21

At which university currently studying? Stenden

Current degree course and level? IBMS

When started studying there? S14

Previous courses followed? None

Parental address? Shropshire

Type of home environment? First rural then urban.

Financial background? Average

Please could you describe how you arrived at the decision to study in the Netherlands.

I took 2 years out after my A-levels. I didn't want to go to university; I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. And then I went travelling with my friend. I then met my boyfriend and he then got me a job in Asia, in Bangkok, as a sales rep. And then we moved back to England. I worked for a bit as a barmaid and waitress, and then I thought this is the time to go to uni, and he is Dutch and actually studied at Stenden, so that's how I came to know about Stenden.

Right, so that's the main reason then, I guess?

Yeah, and also I wanted to study abroad and IBMS offers of course the chance to do your internship and exchange programme, which is one of the things that attracted me to the course.

That you could study abroad, first of all in the Netherlands and then also...

Yeah, go further.

And why did you want to study abroad?

I just love travelling. I love living in a visiting new places.

Okay, so to what extent was it your own decision?

100%.

You weren't influenced at all by family or friends?

No.

How did friends feel about you coming here?

Some of my friends were happy I was going to uni, eventually. But some thought it was quite a big jump. But some of my friends are quite traditional English people, who you know you go to school in England, go to uni in England, and that's your life.

How did family feel about you coming here?

My family were, as long as I am happy, they're happy, so for them it wasn't a problem.

To what extent did technology make moving abroad easier as it means you can stay in touch?

Really, easy.

It makes a difference?

A lot. Yeah I find out so much information about Stenden through technology. Yeah, it really really helped me especially also when I was travelling and just networking and.....

So looking for information, but that the fact that you could easily Skype, text, email, use social media...

Yeah, especially when living abroad it makes life a lot easier; contact can be done in five seconds.

Would you have gone abroad, say 20 years ago, like when I came here in 1992, I could phone obviously but it was quite expensive, and write letters. Would that have made a difference to you?

I think I would have still done it, but there would have been a lot more factors involved for me to consider. It wouldn't have been such an easy choice.

Did you know that some British students were already in the Netherlands?

I imagined that there were some British students somewhere in the country but I wasn't that shocked when I found out that it was a limited amount, especially within Stenden.

And how do you feel about that, that you haven't met any more British students?

In a way I would have liked to have met more British students but then it's also quite good for me being the only British student on my course because I get remembered a lot more easily. Communication is also easy in a way but I also like being the only British student because it makes me have to interact with other people so I get to learn a lot more about different cultures, and I have to stand up and meet friends, otherwise I will be on my own. I don't have someone to fall back to.

Did you know that programmes are in English?

I did, I knew that IBMS and tourism were taught in English, but I didn't know about any other courses.

And the financial situation, did you know that there are quite low tuition fees compared to the UK?

This was also one of the things that attracted me because I'm paying for university all by myself. Obviously 10,000 Pounds a year can't do, and even with a loan on top, the interest is so high, and I didn't really want to come away from uni with a mountain of debt. So that's also part of the reason why I chose to study here.

So it wasn't the initial main motivator, but it's an extra big benefit?

Definitely.

And if I understand correctly, UK student loans aren't available outside the UK?

At the beginning it put me off a little, but then I've been working beforehand and saving quite a lot of money so that's all going now, little by little, on university fees. But I'm also trying to look for a job here as well, and trying to fund certain extra things that are needed.

Before you came to NL, what did you expect it would be like to study here?

Um, I'd been to the Netherlands before just for visiting, just for a few weeks, er, so I had a good idea of the Dutch people and the way of life, but studying here I was quite shocked about how relaxed it can be...

That's your experience after you came?

Yeah.

In what way?

Um, some Dutch students are...5.5 is enough, and they're happy with that. They don't really try to aim higher. Um, the Dutch I've met so far don't seem to get really stressed by deadlines; it's oh it will happen, don't panic, so that's quite different to the average British student.

So you're saying that that shocked you?

Yeah, I just haven't been around many people like that before; at school the majority of my friends were always, I've got a deadline; we're going to aim for the highest grade you can get.

Considered studying at any other universities and countries?

No, not really to be honest. I think part of because I heard good things about Stenden and also because the Netherlands is so close to England I always thought that if I do need to go home or want to go home, the cost...

And somewhere further away might have been more of an issue?

Yeah.

If you could turn the clock back, would you have made a different choice, considering what you know now?

No.

What can you tell me about how friends of yours made their decision as to whether to study abroad/in NL or not?

No. Not at the very beginning. Many are doing exchange programmes now but none of my friends have studied abroad for the whole university experience.

And why do you think it is that they didn't think about applying abroad?

I think when we left school we all wanted to stay together, we were so used to being all together, that a lot of people just were kind of stuck in a routine and in a

rhythm. And also I think a lot of my friends like the English system. I think some; their parents obviously played an influence.

Interesting isn't it, that; you did something different.

Yeah, I mean, they were all supportive, but I'm glad that I did it. I can see the difference when I go home now. I've got so much more to say, and they're just the average night out in England, whereas I've got so many friends from other countries that I start talking about them and the differences, so there's a lot more for me to say.

Yes, interesting. So, richer experiences.

If you were a marketer at a Dutch university, like Stenden, what aspects of studying here would you promote to attract more British students?

How international it is. You're constantly in a learning environment, even if you're not in a lesson, just simply because of all the different cultures. I think that would be my main selling point, and also the different courses that they offer. I'd just especially sell IBMS, in the way that it's a management programme but you learn so many different aspects of the business world, such as accounting, bookkeeping, economics, and also of course the internship and exchange programme wherever you would like to go.

So you're saying that's a course which you couldn't easily find in the UK?

I think, the universities in England do do exchange programmes, but I think it is much more expensive and there isn't so much more of an opportunity to do it. Most students have to go through a process by which they are chosen; that's what I have heard from some of my friends; I don't know if that's the case for all universities. Yeah, I think that they have a limited choice in some cases as well.

Do you mean the...?

The universities only give limited destinations to go to, so in a way they can be limited.

So you wouldn't promote the cost aspects?

Yeah, I guess I would. It depends on what country they were in and what their educational programme was like in that country, but for another British student who was thinking about studying I would definitely say to consider Stenden, because of the costs.

What is your reaction to the following statement? The opportunity to study in the Netherlands, with its low tuition fees, potentially helps British students from poorer backgrounds to be able to afford to study.

I would completely agree with that. Completely. If it wasn't because of that I wouldn't be here, and wouldn't have gone to university. So for me I completely agree. However, I can see how some people would disagree.

Why?

I think I can imagine, with that statement, if they were Dutch would say, maybe it's not fair, you should study in your own country. I think you can take different views on it.

So apart from of whether it's fair or not to Dutch taxpayers, for example, you would completely agree.

Yes. I think also a big thing for British students at the moment, and that's also a barrier that I faced, was that universities are really pushing up the grade boundaries, so you have to be a A star, or an A student, and then the lower universities, A to B, and that's just not a category I was in when I got my A levels, so for two years I was thinking Oh I'm pretty stupid, I can't go to university in England, until I found out about Stenden, which of course has entry barriers, but I met them, so for me as well I thought hey you know what actually I can go to university. So England at the moment is making it really hard for people to go to university.

And if they want to, they have to pay a lot?

And I think, if you go to university in England, and you're prepared to pay that much money, you should make sure that it's exactly what you want to do, because to waste four or five years and then to come out with so much debt and then go into a job which you have your degree in; I can't imagine it to be nice.

Have you got anything else which is relevant to this research which you would like to tell me?

No, I don't think so.

Transcription ends at 20 mins.

No. of interview? 4

BUAS4

Gender? F

First name?

Age? 20

At which university currently studying? Stenden

Current degree course and level? IHM Bachelor's

When started studying there? S14

Previous higher education followed? None

Parental address? Nottinghamshire

Type of home environment? Suburban

Financial background? Average

Start of transcript at 3 min. 35 sec.

I'm interested in how you came to study in the Netherlands and at Stenden.

My mum knew R., a British student who came here, and told me about the university, and she kept making me look at the website, and I didn't for ages, and then eventually I looked at it and it seemed interesting, and so we came to the open day, and I pretty much fell in love with Stenden after the open day. And I like travelling so it's nice to live in a different country; it's different.

But why particularly Stenden, do you think?

Because of the personal connection, and because of the course, and because of the real world learning practical module.

So you didn't have any Dutch family or friends as connections?

No, not at all.

So you said that your mother was quite influential. (laughs). And anyone else who helped influence you?

And my mum's best friend. It was kind of they gave me a push in the right direction and it was my decision if I wanted to or not.

So I guess that your mother was very positive about you coming then?

Yeah.

And any other family members; how did they feel about it?

My dad and both my brothers supported it fully.

And friends?

Yeah, they didn't mind.

Not particularly positive or negative.

Ah, no, I think they were all really happy for me. I wasn't going to go to uni and then now they are really happy for me.

Right. And do you think with modern technology these days, did that make it any easier a decision to come?

Yeah, because I can still keep in contact with anybody from England and the website was one of the main reasons why I came here.

How would you keep in contact with people in England?

Through Whatsapp, Facebook and Skype. It's kind of less scary that I still have contact with them.

So do you think, for example when I came here in 92, there was much less technology. I could phone, but that was obviously expensive, and I could write letters. So if that had applied to you, would it have affected your decision?

I think I still would have come here, because I'm quite independent and I don't get homesick really. I think just the technology made it easier, so it's less daunting.

And were you aware that there were other British students already in the Netherlands?

I knew that there were very few, like one or two.

And did that make any difference either way?

Not really, I think I like other cultures and I've been around other cultures a lot so I think everybody's the same so it's quite fine. I was a little bit disappointed that there's no English, but it didn't affect my decision cause I only knew of about two people who are English here.

You were a little disappointed that there were so few?

Yeah.

It would have been extra nice?

Yeah. It would have been nice to have had other English around, but I'm quite fine without them. Sometimes it's nice to be away from the English.

Before you looked at the programme, I suppose you knew a bit about the programme from R....?

..and from the website, and then from the open day, and that kind of taught me about PBL and all that stuff.

And before that, did you know that there were programmes in the Netherlands in English?

No.

And with the financial situation, did you know that the tuition fees were a lot lower?

Yeah, that's a big reason why I came as well, because it's ridiculously expensive in England now so I think the two grand fees was really good.

Were you aware before you thought about coming, or was it an extra bonus?

It was an extra bonus, it was kind of a contributing factor. I think if it was seven or eight or nine grand here I wouldn't have come; maybe?

And I believe that the UK student loans aren't available here. Was that a factor?

It was a little bit, but then I don't know it's easier to just pay it out of my savings and have my parents help me a bit than end up with loads of debt and interest and all that, so for me it didn't really affect me that much, cause my parents fully supported me, but it would have been nice to have some sort of.., cause at the start it's like, where do I get my money from, cause usually everybody goes on loans.

Before you came to the open day, for example, what did you expect it would be like?

I don't know. I expected it to be fun and social, I had quite a culture shock when I came here because, I don't know, I expected it to be a lot closer to England and English people, and I've met Dutch people before and they've always been like really nice and I thought one thing about Dutch people, and then I came here and it took me a while to adjust to how people are and how people interact with each other and things like that.

Can you give an example?

I feel that the Dutch guys and girls are a little bit underdeveloped, kind of immature a little bit.

Compared to English people the same age?

Yeah, I think so. I was expecting the clubs to be a little bit better, as well (laughs).

In the sense of?

More of them, I think, and bigger.

So the night life?

I mean it's still great but ...it's just different. There's only three clubs; two of them are really small, and there 's another one which makes me angry cause there's like glass all over the floor and you have to pay with these fake coins and not real money (laughs), but it's quite fine.

And you're comparing that with Nottingham?

Yeah.

And is that just Leeuwarden do you think; a lot of students go out in Groningen, I guess?

Yeah, it's probably just Leeuwarden; it's quite a small city.

And comparing with how you experience it now; anything to add there? What you thought before compared to studying here...

I don't know. I think it's kind of reached my expectations, if not gone further.

In terms of?

The school system. And the people. And I quite like the city; I like living in a small city, cause I think that if I went to uni in Amsterdam I wouldn't get a degree at all, there's too much going on, so it's nice that it's quite secluded and peaceful for studying.

Have you lived in other places apart from Nottingham?

No, I've always lived in Nottingham. I went travelling around South East Asia for four months, so that was the first time I was away from home for a long period of time. But if I've been in England, I've always lived in Nottingham.

And you said you'd met people from other cultures before. Was that...?

..when I've travelled. Including the Dutch people.

And we've discussed the financial aspect. So it helped significantly that it was cheap?

Yeah.

And you were able to come here because... it was a shock in the beginning realising that you had to pay everything yourself as such...

Yeah, up front.

And you've had help from your parents?

Yeah, my parents definitely helped me. Yeah, what I said before, it's a shame that you can't get any loans or anything but it's something you can move around.

Do you work here?

No. I worked before I came and used the money I made. And then also I used some of my savings.

So you didn't really look at other countries because you found out about Stenden?

Yeah, I didn't look at any other countries, but when I was eighteen I applied to universities in England, but I changed my choice about five different times, and then I took a couple of years out to work out what I wanted to do and to work out if I wanted to go to uni at all, and then I kind of just assumed I wouldn't go to uni, and then I was in the hospitality industry and I really liked it, and then I heard about this place and I didn't apply anywhere else or think about anywhere else, I just applied here.

So you didn't look at Switzerland at all?

No, I heard that it was quite expensive in Switzerland.

If you could turn the clock back, would you have made a different choice?

No

And when friends of your two years ago made their decision as to where to study, did they think about going abroad?

No. Only one person did, cause she wanted to do languages, but I think she considered more working abroad than studying abroad. But nobody really knows or thinks about studying outside the UK.

And why do you think that is?

Cause they don't know about it.

So they literally just think okay, I'm going to university, these are all the universities in the UK, that's my choice.

Yeah, I don't think anybody knows, nobody thinks to leave the country and study abroad, and I don't think that anyone knows that there are universities that are doing really practical courses that aren't so academic, and the fact that it's in English. I mean this whole school is taught in English and there's about five English people here so it's crazy.

And if they did know about it, do you think that more would consider it?

Definitely, I think they would consider it.

So if you were a marketer at Stenden, what aspects of studying here would you promote to attract more British students?

The real world learning in the hotel. The working with different cultures. The style of learning which I think is quite modern, quite useful for after you leave university rather than just whilst you're here. The facilities, like the computers, the rooms, and I think the teachers are really good. And the food is really good.

Here (in the canteen)?

Yeah.

So most of those things are specifically Stenden I suppose, aren't they. Is there anything in general for the Netherlands?

Um, I suppose it's location is good because if you want to you can get to Groningen or Amsterdam in an hour or two.

But for the Netherlands in general?

I like it because it's quite a relaxed lifestyle. It's really easy going, you know. You don't have much trouble when you're in the streets. The music is quite good, there's quite a lot of music events all around the Netherlands, which is nice, and festivals and stuff. Also the fact that the Netherlands is so small, so you can travel inside of it really easily. And the fact that everyone speaks English is definitely helpful.

What is your reaction to the following statement? The opportunity to study in the Netherlands, with its low tuition fees, potentially helps British students from poorer backgrounds to be able to afford to study.

Yes, I think that's true, but you know if you add up all the flights and accommodation; it still adds up to quite a lot of money after four years of it, but yeah, that's kind of true.

So you said very few people know about (the option to study here), but if they did, would it help...?

Yeah, I think so, it's a lot less scary, two grand tuition fees, if you want to live here low budget, you can live here on a low budget. I am sure you can get some tuition fees off the Dutch government; I've heard of that, so I think that that's definitely helpful; in England it's ten grand for one year tuition fees and then you've got everything else on top, it's crazy how much it is now, so yeah it would help poorer people.

If you had decided that the perfect course for you was in England, would you have gone there?

If there was the perfect course for me in England, in a university or city which I felt attached or connected to, then I would have done it, but I've never heard of a hospitality course. So I think the courses here are quite good.

Is it possible that the admission level is lower here than it would be in the UK?

I wouldn't know, because it changes for each subject, but I think it was lower here. I didn't get very good grades at A levels, and could still get in, whereas my grades trying to apply to a uni in England, could have allowed me to go to some places, but there was a lot less choice.

Cause what do you need to be accepted here, is it just two A levels?

I can't remember, I think it's like two or three A levels at pass level. I got two Ds and a C, so that's quite low, but you need your Maths and English and your GCSEs.

Anything else to mention?

I think it's really good how many people here you can meet here, cause you're not only in one class in your first module, but then you change modules, and change classes again and again, and you're also mixed with older years when you are working. Oh, and being able to go to Bali and Qatar and South Africa, that really helped, cause I want to work and travel as well at the same time, so it's really kind of amazing; you can do half of your study; connections Stenden has with internships and stuff like that.

So a lot of the things which you have been talking about which is positive applies specifically to Stenden, if I understand it correctly?

Yeah. But I don't think I ever had any problem with the idea of living in the Netherlands. Say if I was going to live in Germany or France, I think I would be a little bit hesitant but for some reason the Netherlands is not a scary thing to kind of have to move to and it's really close to the UK. Everybody is friendly and speaks English. And it's quite small, they are not extravagant or anything, so it's not really that scary moving here.

Stopped at 25 mins 46 secs.

Background information

No. of interview? 5

BUAS5

Gender? M

First name?

Age? 20

At which university currently studying? Stenden

Current degree course and level? Leisure Management

When started studying there? Feb 14

Previous courses followed (if so: what, where, when, why stopped)?

Parental address (county)? Nottinghamshire

Describe where grew up as urban, suburban, rural, or no clear answer? Urban

Compared to the UK population in general, financial background wealthier than average, about average, or less wealthy than average? Wealthier

I'm particularly interested in how you arrived at the decision to study in the Netherlands and Stenden?

Well, in England I didn't want to go to university, mainly cause my grades weren't good enough to do a good course at a good uni, and also I didn't like the idea of doing another 3 to 4 years at university, doing something I wouldn't really want to do, cause that was the other thing; I didn't know what to do.

And I was more interested in sport, but as I said, my grades weren't good enough to do sport science, which is now, cause it is so popular, you need really high grades. And then, so I took a year out, just working at a leisure centre with kids and sports, and then my dad found, through the mutual friend of S (fellow student), my dad's work colleague, she found Stenden.

Well, first he found Switzerland, but then we looked at the prices, it was about 50 grand or something a year, and then they found Stenden, and saw the PBL thing, and that was quite interesting, cause what I didn't like about England uni (sic) is that you just sit in a room with like millions of other people and just listen to them talk, and then PBL is more like college and school, just more interactive, well for me I learn better.

And then we kind of looked into Stenden and it kind of was like too good to be true; it was really, really cheap compared to England, and LM was a good course, especially cause I could narrow the minor down to sports management.

So then it wasn't really the Netherlands which attracted me but then, once I found it, I thought another country would be quite cool. Cause I've got a friend in America, and then I've got another friend who is also in America, and I thought studying abroad is quite interesting and also it's different to most English people, and then on the CV you'll stand out.

And then yeah, we came to the open day and we were expecting some sort of catch but it just never came. And at the moment, yeah, it's going all right. Good decision.

And I also brought a friend along who was a big influence, like I wasn't sure about coming on my own, because of the lack of English people, and I thought, cos it's international that everyone would go with their international friends, like the Germans would be with the Germans, and all that, and I was frightened like of being the only English person, which I was at the time. I'd have been on my own. So I found a friend who I brought with me, but he quit in October, cos he didn't like the PBL system. And now I'm fine.

To start off with that was nice maybe, and now...?

Yeah, that edged me in, and I feel more confident now, like meeting new people.

Yeah, cos there are seven other Brits here at Stenden now.

Yeah, I didn't know any in February when I started; I knew none. I didn't know of any, I didn't know about any.

So that was a barrier and fear in a way at the beginning?

Yeah, cos I thought that nationalities would together. But it turns out they don't, well the true internationals don't, cos there aren't that many of them. The Germans like to stick together, but there is a lot of them. I know Lithuanians, Arubans, some of the Dutch, and Germans, I know a few Germans.

In Leisure Management?

Yeahm, but they are all in the International Stream; I don't really talk to the Dutch stream. They just don't like speaking English (laughs).

And the International Stream from, for example, MEM or Tourism Management?

No, not really, it is just leisure we talk to. I know a few people, but not really. One or two.

So you didn't have any personal Dutch connections?

No, zero.

So your parents, to what extent did they influence your decision?

Quite a lot I think. But they didn't really force me, but they did really want me to. But they found that they convinced me to come to the open day. I think they would have been quite disappointed if I hadn't come to the open day, if I had just said no from the off. I wouldn't say that they forced me, like they didn't bribe me or anything like that. They just kept saying all the good things.

So that was a fairly big influence.

Yes.

And did friends influence you?

I'd only say, the person I was coming with. I was more to the no side, and once he said he would come I was like yeah. That basically made my decision, in the end.

And other sources, like social media?

No, I had never heard of Stenden actually. I don't know anyone who has heard of it either, in England.

And so your family were very positive about you coming here. And other friends who stayed in the UK, how did they feel about it?

They thought it was really good. Especially because there is like a group of six of us, and three of us are now abroad, and they kind of wish that they had done that as well, or at least done a year abroad or just gone abroad.

Three in the UK and three abroad?

Yeah.

To what extent does modern technology make it easier for you to come here?

It's not a barrier at all really. Cos I don't really feel like I'm in another country really, just because I can use the internet pretty much anywhere. And you can do calls just through the internet without an actual phone, just on WiFi, with Facetime or Skype. I don't find it difficult at all.

If you'd have been in my position 20 odd years ago, would it have made it harder, do you think?

Um, not really, I don't think. We're not really a family that are really...we have like a thing where there's no contact is good news, cos it means that nothing's gone wrong.

So you would have been just as likely to come?

Yes.

And before you came to the open day, did you think that there were many British students in the Netherlands.

Um, I thought there would be more than none! Like maybe around ten at least.

Did you have the idea that there would be British students in the Netherlands in general?

I knew that there some in Amsterdam, because I was also going to look at the university there, but because they didn't have the February intake, I didn't even bother going to the open day; I didn't want to wait another half a year.

Before you thought about the Netherlands, did you realise that there were programmes in English?

No.

So you might have, for example, assumed that they were in Dutch?

Yeah, cos that's the first thing everyone asks is, so do you study in Dutch?

And the tuition fees, that they are very low, like you said....?

Very low.

But that was a surprise when you found out?

Yeah, we couldn't believe it. We were expecting some hidden charge somewhere, but it's ridiculously low. Cause at the moment it's about 11,000 Euros a year for studying in England, since two or three years ago. And it's like that for the whole four years, so it's ridiculously cheap here.

And the downside is that you can't get a student loan here?

Yeah, that was the catch in the end, but luckily I have funding from my parents. But with average English students who aren't financially stable, they wouldn't be able to come here without some sort of student loan, which you can't get, unless you get a job, which is pretty hard if you don't speak Dutch.

Before you came to the open day, what did you expect it would be like to study in the Netherlands?

Um, I really didn't know. I had only seen the little PBL video. Otherwise, I presumed it would be similar to England, like highly based on assignments, stuff like that. But I've noticed that it's more like college, that's higher education, from what I hear from my friends, not as much like uni, but that might be because I am English and so I have kind of an advantage, so it's not as hard. But I know that my friends in the UK are always in the library all night, and I'm like really? That just doesn't happen here, although I, don't know, that might happen eventually (laughs).

And then when you came here, you've experienced it now, and you're saying it's not too difficult?

I wouldn't say it was easy, but I'm not struggling.

Apart from Amsterdam, did you think about any other countries?

Apart from Switzerland, but we saw the price and said no straightaway.

And your friends who went to the States? How did they come to that decision?

One got a football scholarship, so he kind of went there; he didn't do very well at school and he still wanted a degree, he then got a scholarship, so it's more that he studies in America but he plays football as well, so it was for free the end, the tuition fees were paid for.

And the other one, he is straining to be a pilot, so he started off in Oxford, but he had to go to Arizona to actually fly the plane as part of the course.

So they didn't start by thinking 'I want to go abroad, where shall it be; that's just where the opportunities were. So they wouldn't have thought about going to the Netherlands for example.

No.

And friends who have stayed in the UK; did they think about going abroad?

No, I don't think so. It's just kind of ingrained in people; go to school, college, uni. I think I know one person who thought about going to Jamaica, but that didn't last very long I don't think; she's in Lincoln.

You just don't think about it. You go abroad to travel, not to study. But they probably think that studying abroad is not in English; people just don't think about it. You don't get told at school either; you just don't get told about it.

Also the Grand Tour was a reason why I came here as well.

Specifically to Stenden?

Yes, that was one of the very good points.

Yes, if you were a marketer at a Dutch university, what aspects would you promote?

The Grand Tour definitely, and the exchange programme. PBL. Erm, the whole practical side of it, like management skills, like you're really applying, you're not just learning things, you're doing it as well. And also the whole hotel system with the students is quite good at showing how practical it actually is, as an example.

So that's for Stenden. And what about the whole Netherlands?

I don't know, it's just a chance to get out of England. I can't think of anything else. Maybe the legal weed (laughs), that might work for some people.

So most of the things that stand out for you are specifically Stenden-related then. So if somebody said I'm thinking about going to another university in the Netherlands...?

I wouldn't know anything about it.

If a British person knew that say in Utrecht there was a perfectly good course for the same price as here, would that be something that you could promote, or would that not make a difference?

I guess I could only promote the living aspect, not the educational side of it, as I don't know how other Dutch universities work, or if they use similar methods.

What is your reaction to the following statement? The opportunity to study in the Netherlands, with its low tuition fees, potentially helps British students from poorer backgrounds to be able to afford to study.

Erm, maybe to afford to study, but not to live, because there's no help at all there.

If you don't have parental funding...

...you can't survive. The only help we can get is if we work 50 hours a month, then we get the tuition fees back, and that's not enough to live either, because it's so low, perhaps for half a year, but not the whole year. But then again you're working so, potentially.... I don't work so I don't know what it's like if you have a job. But it would take a lot of time to have enough to live off.

End of transcript

No. of interview? 6

MAUA6

Gender? F

First name?

Age? 21

At which university currently studying? UvA

Current degree course and level? Human Geography master's

When started studying there? S14

Previous courses followed? BA Geography at University of Coventry until 2014

Parental address? Somerset

Type of home environment? Rural

Financial background? (Slightly) below average

Transcription starts at 2 min 25 sec.

Please could you describe how you arrived at the decision to study in the Netherlands.

I wanted to do a Master's for a while, and I was looking at Master's in the UK cause I didn't really think about going abroad, and then two of my friends went on Erasmus to the Hague and they were putting pictures and posting on Facebook that they were having a great time and I was like - the Netherlands!; I should look into it. I knew it was cheaper but I'd never thought about it, so that was my first sort of stage of investigation that I should look internationally.

So I was using the FindaMasters website thing, to look for an international Master's, but I wanted Human Geography; I didn't want anything else, cause I want to stay in academia, so I don't want to do a more applied course, I want to do human geography or an offshoot of human geography. And I didn't want to commit myself to more than one year, because of money reasons and also because I didn't know if I was going to like it when I get there, that kind of thing.

And then, to be honest, Amsterdam and Nijmegen were the only two that I found which I was interested in.

In terms of the course you mean, or the location?

The course, because all of the others, like there is one in Sweden which was 2 years, and then other countries didn't really offer human geography. It was only really the Netherlands and Sweden and the Netherlands was really the only place that I could do it in in one year.

Did you look at Groningen?

No, I don't think I did. Once I had found Amsterdam, I didn't really do much more research to be honest.

So you didn't have any Dutch connections formed already? Just friends that you mentioned who went to The Hague?

No

To what extent were you influenced by opinions of family?

I don't know, like it was my idea and I was the one to have done all the research, and then obviously I told them about it and they were very excited and my parents love coming over and staying with me and all that stuff.

So I wasn't really influenced by them to look for it, but I was definitely influenced by once I had found it, they really really encouraged me, not in a particularly pushy way but they were just very excited for me and behind my decision to come out here.

And friends?

Yeah, sort of the same, like I had done all the research, it is not like anyone else suggested it but once I had started it and once I had found Amsterdam, I started talking about it with everyone and all of my friends so so encouraging and really supportive and stuff.

Were you influenced at all by opinions you saw in the media sites and social media?

Not really, no.

Say if you had been in a situation 20 years ago with out technology, would you still have come?

Yeah, it makes a huge difference to me, because I have got a very tightly knit group of friend back in the UK, but with Facebook and Skype and a smartphone on 4G, so I have got my phone and I can talk to them whenever I want, anytime of day and it doesn't matter.

And the time difference is only an hour, so it is not that bad, and I talk to my parents so easily and I think if I didn't have that, because again I am really close with my family as well, so I was really apprehensive about moving this far away, because I was so worried about missing home, missing friends and whatever.

With modern technology that is so minimised because I can literally talk to them all day every day whenever I want through Skype or Facebook or whatever, so that really makes a difference. And I still write home and stuff, but that is more for the novelty, like it is nice to receive a postcard or a letter and it is nice to write them, but it is not my primary form of contact.

I would say that I am a 'stayer' at heart, because I like being at home, I'm like a home bird, me and my friends would refer to me. Like when I was at university, Coventry to Somerset was like two and half, three hours, and I missed it so much: I didn't like being away. But with my phone and the internet and stuff it's not a problem. And like I said, I would still characterise myself as the kind of person who wants to live at home, but I'm noit even living in the same country as home.

If you had been in my situation would you have come?

No, no way! It would have been too difficult for me.

Before you came, did you know that there were British students already studying in the Netherlands?

Yeah, like I said, I had my two friends on Erasmus, so I was aware of that, whereas that I didn't know anyone personally except those two and

obviously they have already done it and come back to the UK. But to be honest, on my course, I thought that there would be more British students. I don't know why, but I thought there would be less Dutch students, or I thought it would be more balanced.

Before you started looking, did it occur to you that there are available courses in English?

No, I didn't think about that at all until I started researching and then I saw that quite a lot of them are taught in English.

Is that common do you think?

Yeah, a lot of people don't realise that they are in English, because I mean every one was so shocked and when I tell people that I do my masters in Amsterdam, people assume I can speak Dutch and I cannot speak a word of Dutch. So i think a lot of people are completely unaware of the opportunities. Especially in the Netherlands, because the Netherlands has so much going on.

What is the tuition fee and cost situation like? You mentioned that there might be an issue?

Yeah, so the other Masters I was looking at was in Bristol and that cost £6,500 and then Amsterdam is £1,500. So that was my initial reason in looking, but I didn't realise there was going to be that much of a disparity in cost when I first started looking so I was amazed. And that was one of the biggest selling points, first the cost, and then having the opportunity to live in Amsterdam, those were my 2 biggest reasons in pursuing this.

You didn't know about the big difference until after you had started researching it?

Yeah, I knew it was cheaper out here, I just knew that, but I didn't know how much cheaper and I didn't know if it would be different for me because I am an international, which is why I started looking into it, just to see, and then when I saw saw the cost I was like 'this is amazing, this is so cheap!'

But it is a huge cost difference! And I don't know if that will change in the UK because you can get a student loan now from September to do a masters so I don't know if that will change anything.

Obviously at the moment you cannot get any kind of helper anything, so it was a high factor for me because my parents can't afford to pay my tuition fees, I am paying it all myself.

I'm not entirely sure what the costs are for a masters here, and in the UK so are those standard typical prices?

I think in the Netherlands it costs between 1,800 and 2,000 Euros which is around £1,500 pounds but then in the UK it is between £6,000 and £8,000 pounds.

And did you know before you started researching it that the UK student loans not being available in the Netherlands?

Yeah, well they are not available in the UK either. So I was aware of that form when I was at school.

One of my friends did an engineering degree and she has applied for her masters straight away and she was saying that she did it like that because then you can still get a student loan if you do it all in one go. And my first and second year at uni, I didn't really want to do a masters because I never really thought about it because of the money, also I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with my life but I thought that it was going to be so difficult to pursue, that it wasn't until my 3rd year of uni that I realised I enjoy geography so much that I am just going to have to do a masters and then I started looking into the different options, and the costs.

Before you came to the Netherlands, what did you expect it was going to be like to study in the Netherlands?

I didn't really think about it that much because when I finished my degree at Coventry, I tried to stay at Coventry as late as I could, so I was wrapped up in finishing university, saying goodbye to all of my friends, moving home, and then I only had 6 weeks at home before moving out to Amsterdam, and in that 6 weeks I was trying to spend all my time seeing family, and I was working trying to save up as much money as possible, and my grandmother was really ill at the time, and my brother was getting ready to move off to university, so I was so busy that I didn't really have a chance to think about what it was going to be like until I got here, so I didn't really have any expectations of the course, I just knew that it was going to be really hard. I didn't really have the time to think about it.

And now that you have experienced what it is like, how would you characterise it?

Well, I don't know if I can talk about the Dutch experience as a whole, because it is kind of a mess at the university, and there is so much bureaucracy and no one really seems to know what they are doing. Not as a subject matter, the teaching is fine, but it seems like the organisation of everything doesn't really make any sense, and the course structure doesn't really make much sense.

The Dutch students who had been to UvA before were used to it and told me that, that is just what it is like, and the other Dutch students that have come from else where have said that the Dutch system as a whole is quite bureaucratic but they are like, UvA is worse than other places they have been to before.

I do not know how your course is structured but ours is in 8 week chunks, so 6 weeks in teaching, 1 week in assessment and 1 week off, but only 6 weeks for a whole module? So it is a bit manic, and everything has been such a quick turn around. In England you do less, but in more greater depth, and I think that I prefer that to the way that the system is organised over here.

Is there any evidence of a strike out there, did you notice that?

Well it is weird because I was completely unaware that it was going on and that is kind of one of the things about it in UvA, because I was receiving emails about it but they were all in Dutch and if I get an email in Dutch, I just delete it. But we were talking about it recently, I am doing one module in human geography in theory and social applications, and in the last 3 lectures we have just sort of discussed the strikes and stuff and we are on a different campus to the Occupy movement which was in a different building in a different campus and other people have gone to see it and stuff, but I kind of missed the whole thing.

Because it has made international news now as well and I am just completely unaware of it, which is kind of awkward.

So I am just looking into the financial aspect, so you said that you had saved up, was there any other way that you have managed to make it work?

I had inheritance from my Grandma which I have spent on this, child bonus bond savings which my mum had bought me loads of those and when I was 16 and put them into a savings account so I had those for something which I decided to spend on this. And my parents gave me some money, and then Coventry have this international experience grant thing, so they have given me around £400 to study out here. And, a local charity in my village back home gave me £500 grant.

The combination of all these different sources, were they all necessary?

Yeah, I just got enough to get through the year but I have been living off of approximately 25 Euros a week, so yeah, I have needed it all.

And you didn't look at any other countries other than Sweden and the Netherlands?

No, just the Netherlands and Sweden but Sweden was ruled out straight away because the courses were two years. And Amsterdam was actually the only one that I had actually applied to but I also started writing out applications to Bristol and Exeter, but never finished them.

If you could turn the clock back, would you have made a different choice?

No

And any other friends that were considering university or a masters, I am wondering did any of them ever consider going abroad or not?

I know one boy on my course at Coventry, and he was doing physical geography and when I spoke to him, he said that he was taking a gap year abroad to work and then he was going to do his masters in Sweden. But I have not spoken to any one else who have thought about it or considered it. I think a lot of people that I know have just done it near where they grew up so that they can live at home and do a masters at the same time.

The boy who considered Sweden, did he mention why?

I didn't ask to be honest, but I think that he mentioned the low fees and living abroad. Obviously it is a really great experience being able to live abroad for a year or two.

And that is one of your motivations for moving away?

Yeah, I wanted to do my third year abroad, like an Erasmus or something but it never really came to fruition. So that was another reason as to why I was so desperate to come, because I wanted to live abroad. For the adventure.

If you were a marketer of a Dutch University, what aspects of studying in the Netherlands would you promote in order to attract more British students?

To be honest, I think that they could promote more the fact that it is taught in English, because people don't seem aware that this opportunity is available for them and obviously the price. The price is always such a huge decisive factor of whether you are going to do a post-graduate study, but I just don't think that a lot of people are aware that they can study abroad and do the whole thing in English.

You are talking about masters courses there, would that still apply to bachelor's courses?

Yeah, I guess so, I do actually know someone who did their bachelor's in the Netherlands but for a lot of people that is a big leap from spending all your years living at home to spending 3 years away in a foreign country.

So yeah, I guess it would be slightly different in term of you would want to know if you were going to be looked after, and in a safe environment and that it wasn't going to be a horrible transition, and all that kind of stuff. As a bachelor's student that is what I would be more concerned about, the transition.

What is your reaction to the following statement?

The opportunity to study in the Netherlands, with it's low tuition fees, potentially helps British students from poorer backgrounds to be able to afford to study.

Yeah, I would say that I agree with that, but then it is not just that in particular whether you are a poorer student or not, I think that any one or most students (unless particularly well off), would really benefit from the lower tuition fees.

Have you got anything else which is relevant to this research which you would like to mention?

Not that I can think of.

Transcription ends at 25 min 30 sec.

No. of interview? 7

MUAP7

Gender? M

First name?

Age? 27

At which university currently studying? Utrecht

Current degree course and level? M.Sc. in Urban Geography

When started studying there? S12- S13

Previous courses followed? BA Geography at University of Leicester (2005- 2008)

Parental address? South Yorkshire

Type of home environment? Suburban

Financial background? Average

Transcription starts at 3 min 12 sec.

I'm interested in the moment when you decided to study in the Netherlands, and how you came to that decision.

Well, basically, I've always been interested in different cultures, since I was little. My mum's side of my family has Italian in it, and that's what got me interested in geography, because I prefer obviously the human side of geography. Like yourself, I learned about migration, different cultures, different kinds of movement of people, why they do particular things, so that's why probably, and because I did quite well in it at school anyway, that's probably why I chose to do it at university as well. And then while I was at university, I had the opportunity to do Erasmus and the year abroad, but I was in a relationship at the time and I didn't really capitalise on all those other opportunities I had, and obviously I regretted it.

In the last year of university, I did some basic language courses in Italian, so obviously I was interested in that. And then after graduating university, I went to Italy for 3 or 4 weeks, stayed in Rome, that's actually where I met my girlfriend, who was doing an Erasmus course at the time, who is from Hungary. After that we decided to be together and then moved backwards and forwards a bit between here and Hungary.

Then I did Celta course teaching English in Budapest. And after that I applied for jobs in various different places teaching, and I got a job in Siena, in Tuscany, in Italy so I spent 6 months doing that, which I really enjoyed and then after that I came back to Sheffield for a little bit, and then I moved to stay with my girlfriend in Steghead, Hungary, until she had finished with her Masters degree, and I stayed in Steghead for around 8/9 months.

And then after that we both moved back here to Sheffield, stayed here for 2 years, and I think at some point during those 2 years I really wanted to have a new experience, see somewhere different, live in a different country. Obviously I spent a bit of time in Hungary and I really enjoyed

being in a completely different country in Eastern Europe, spent some time in Sienna which is Mediterranean. So I tried to cover all bases really (laughs).

So, I got the idea that it would be a good idea to do a Masters degree and I did a bit of research, looked at what was available in English, primarily because I thought that would be easiest, and there were courses in various places but mainly the Scandinavian countries, central Europe such as Switzerland and then the Netherlands and obviously at that time is when university fees had just gone up in the UK anyway. So yeah, I could have done something in Sheffield probably at that time but by then the fees had already gone up to around £6000 I think or maybe more. And in the Netherlands at that time, it was 1600 Euros, I think, I paid for the course fees which is practically nothing.

So the 2 main things were the cost and the fact that they do it in English, then the fact that there were courses I was interested in available in the Netherlands, If I would have done an Erasmus while I was in university in Leicester, I would have gone to Utrecht, so it would have ended up being in the same place, so that was something in the back of my mind. My girlfriend was up for it as well and she was already living in a different country anyway.

Did she (girlfriend) go to Utrecht as well?

Yeah, she came with me.

To study?

No she just came here working, she could carry on working for the same company so that worked alright and we still had some source of income. So basically the circumstances came together and pointed to Utrecht so that's what I chose.

So just to check, you didn't have any personal Dutch connections already?

No, no personal Dutch connections.

Were you influenced at all by the opinions of family?

Not at all as the location. Obviously they told me yeah go for it, that's a good idea to do. They are always open to those kind of things. Maybe they influenced me to make the decision 'yes' to do it but I came up with the suggestion. I would say that's the only way in which they influenced me. But it seemed like a golden opportunity, so I applied for it, and once I was accepted my parents were like 'yeah, don't miss out on this opportunity, do it' I would say that is the only way they affected my own decision probably, strengthened and confirmed it in my own head.

What about friends, is that the same situation?

No, no friends involved in any way of influencing me.

And when they knew that you were going to the Netherlands, how did they feel about it? Both parents and friends?

Well yeah obviously my parents fully supported me and thought it was a really good idea and the same with my brother. I had never been to the Netherlands before this and my brother had been to Amsterdam quite a few times and he liked it and supported it as well. My brother and his girlfriend said 'yeah we'd love for you to go cause we can come and visit you.

My friends supported me.'

Now its a lot easier with modern technology, did that have any influence on your decision, that its easy to keep in touch?

For me no, that did not have any impact what so ever, as I said before, previous to moving to the Netherlands I had already been in Hungary for 8/9 months and Italy for 6 months and I'm not someone who speaks to my family every day, but I Skype when I'm away anyway. If it had been my girlfriend, yeah, it might have impacted us both. So in our case not really, no.

Before you were accepted into Utrecht, did you know there were already some British students in the Netherlands?

To be honest I hadn't thought about it and by the time I had applied a year before but I didn't have enough time to sort things out so I deferred it until the year after, so I actually had a year to plan it all. I think after I had applied my mum showed me some articles from newspapers about UK students going to the Netherlands but before actually reading through those, I didn't know about the amount of people that were going there. I suppose I imagined that there would be less British students studying in the Netherlands than there actually were.

How many did you experience?

Its funny cause in my case I only came across 1 or 2. I think in general across the Netherlands in various universities there are quite a lot.

They're going gradually, I don't think there is a huge number e.g. Maastricht and Groningen have been most successful in attracting UK students, but again still not in large numbers.

Comparative to other countries they (the Netherlands) have got quite a lot. So comparatively there are a lot in the Netherlands compared to any where else but they are actually still quite low.....

You say, you found out that the programs were in English, were you aware of that before you thought about coming?

Yeah.

Did you realise before you started thinking about the Netherlands that tuition fees were quite low?

Yeah I think so, but that probably wasn't as big a feature in the decision making because as I said the other options and places available were also low.

What was the situation with the student loan, could you get a student loan from the UK with a Masters?

Don't think so.

And the same case with the Netherlands?

I didn't get any extra money. I think I applied for one scholarship but I didn't apply for any other grants. I think I could have got something but it seemed like more hassle than it was worth.

So before you went to the Netherlands, what did you expect that it would be like to study there?

I didn't really have any preconception of what it would be like to be honest except for my previous university experience I suppose. Before going there, no.

And once you were there...?

Once I was there, the study culture was a bit different to what I'd experienced before. But then the general way of life I found.... so I didn't find it much of a culture shock at all, comparatively to living in other countries, I found the Netherlands very close to the UK.

So not particularly positive or negative experience general studying?

Studying no, neutral really. Some other people struggled with the differences in study culture, particularly 2 of my friends there who were Greek, they found it a bit difficult but for me to be honest it was okay.

The financial aspect, you had to fund yourself, how did you overcome that?

Well, as I said I deferred my entry so I had a year pretty much to organise my finances and save some money together. My girlfriend was still working, we were alright, we had enough to get us through the year. We were using savings as well with out worrying so much really. And obviously the exchange rate meant that I think we were not doing that bad, well at the start of the year but as the year went on it got more expensive to pay the rent because of the exchange rate. But no it was okay.

Would you like to know my experience of being in the Netherlands or just study?

Yeah both.

One thing we did notice was that the general cost of living was probably lower, however the cost of groceries seemed to be higher, surprisingly poorer quality and I did have a preconception that the quality of groceries

and things would be better in the Netherlands. That was one thing that surprised me but the quality of life, I think, is very good in the Netherlands. For me the whole year in general has been a very enjoyable experience. The cycling culture definitely had a big impact on that, being able to move from A to B in half the time you usually could, always being outside, and obviously getting exercise as well, I did really enjoy that.

In terms of people and the character, I don't find it too different to the UK to be honest. But then again I'm someone who's comparing that to more extreme differences.

When you looked at other universities you also looked at Scandinavia, Switzerland...?

Belgium, I looked at a few other places but with the languages I didn't think that I'd be able to.... You pretty much required fluency for a masters.

Where did you find suitable English courses for you?

I think it was Denmark, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, I could have done something in Hungary but I didn't realise at the time. Those were the main places that I looked at.

The choice of the Netherlands was because a suitable course, it was in English... etc.

Tuition fees. Also the university is ranked pretty highly so that probably contributed in some way. The geography department was supposed to be good. Also I read an article in a Sheffield magazine and every time it is published they have one article about a foreign place and it just happened to be Utrecht and I thought maybe it was some kind of sign. The pictures looked beautiful with a canal and everything and the way it was described it seemed like a really nice place, the city itself. So I had an idea it was a nice place in terms of the city, so obviously I think that came into my focus.

If you could turn the clock back would you have made a different choice?

No, I would have gone to Utrecht.

Did you have any British friends or acquaintances that in a similar time period were trying to decide where to do a Master's and if so did they consider going abroad?

No, nobody in the same time period. As you said, British people in general don't seem to be open to the idea of going somewhere else.

Can you think of any evidence as to why that would be?

Well, I think to some extent is the fact that people don't know it is an option. It might have changed now but when I was at university the first time around, I knew about Erasmus, but nobody really suggested that you can go and study wherever you want, it's completely a concept which is outside your general thinking that you can of study somewhere else. I

mean, you've got the idea that you can study on exchanges and things but I had no notion that I could've done my first degree in another country, it never even entered my head. So I suppose the idea is just not there to begin with.

And that's true for bachelor's and master's you're saying?

I would guess so yeah, that's one point. I think the cost is not prohibitive, it's the opposite so I don't think that is a factor.

Language again, the tuition is in English and in the case of the Netherlands, obviously it is a country that can operate 100% in English, I mean, I learnt a bit of Dutch when I was there but it was irrelevant. I could talk to anyone, apart from some old guy, and communicate perfectly well, better than any other country in Europe that I have been to before but I can't imagine that is an issue. Maybe people don't realise the extent to which English is proficient?

There are those people here who are obviously open to seeing different cultures and experiencing different things. I would say those are the types of people who would be likely to go and then there are those who are less open to it to begin with and probably wouldn't consider it an option because they're just not interested in seeing somewhere different. They are perfectly happy that they can do a Masters in their local city or something and if that's the case then they're obviously not going to look into it to begin with.

In my case the main reason that I ended up going was because I had already experienced living in different countries and intrinsically I have an interest in different cultures anyway. I have been in a relationship for the past 7 years with someone who is from a different country, from the other side of Europe, so I suppose I'm probably compared to an average person more used to spending time with an international group. I have a lot of friends who are from Naples in Italy so I have a lot of international friends, I have a girlfriend who is from a different country and I've come from a family who was always open to different cultures and things and I've always been interested in countries and languages so I suppose they are probably the main driving forces behind my decision. And obviously the other factors that pushed that forward are the facts that in the Netherlands it was cheap, it was a good university and the instruction is in English.

If you were a marketer in a Dutch university what aspects of studying here would you promote to attract more British students?

Well as I said, probably promote the fact that you don't need to learn any Dutch. It's sad in a way because people don't need to try but realistically if somebody wants to go away for a year to study, they do not need to learn any Dutch and you will be fine, English is spoken everywhere.

It offers something very similar to the UK so they are not going to have a culture shock, it's not like moving to Saudi Arabia or something but at the same time it is a different country with its own quirks and obviously because of that it is interesting. And obviously it is in an international environment so you are going to meet people from all over. Probably also the fact that it is a small country and in a year you can see most of the country.

And, another point is for those people who do like to keep in contact, obviously I.T. means that it is irrelevant and you are only one country away, I mean you go to Amsterdam, get on the plane and you basically put your seatbelt on and then you are already landing again. It's not very far at all. My brother lives in Brighton and he came to visit us quite a few times just driving.

What is your reaction to the following statement? The opportunity to study in the Netherlands, with its low tuition fees, potentially helps British students from poorer backgrounds to be able to afford to study. Is it also true for average or slightly above average, do you think?

I can't say for above average, I have no idea. It is difficult to say because I don't know what the average income is any more in the UK. At the end of the day, I would have received support from my parents if I had needed it, but it was all off my own back and at that point my girlfriend was earning £15,000 a year, and I was only working part-time. Our combined income wouldn't have been much more than £22,000 or something, so a relatively low amount of household money. I wouldn't have had the money to do it if it was gonna be £6,000. I would imagine for when people are still within the family unit, and being supported by their parents then yeah the same, for people on middle incomes or lower I think yeah definitely, if marketed well then yeah it should be an option that more people contemplate. Because otherwise at £6,000 or £9,000 people will think, well I'm obviously not gonna do that.

Is there anything else that you can think of that might be relevant to my research that might be helpful?

No I don't think so, not off of the top of my head.

And you already mentioned that you didn't meet any other Brits that you know studying?

The course that I did at the university, some of the course were 90% or 95% international students. The course I did there were 2 Greek girls, a guy from Poland, who had done his Bachelors in the Netherlands, a couple of girls from Germany and for a couple of modules there was one British girl I saw in 2 or 3 of my lectures.

I am interested in any British people that have chosen to study abroad somewhere including other countries?

No, as I said, most of my friends and my girlfriend generally are people who have studied abroad but obviously from other European countries, people have come to Britain but not British people going to other places.

It is not part of my research, but you have made me very curious as to what you are doing now?

I initially planned to do a Ph.D. here in Sheffield, in urban planning... but I have basically been working as a graphic designer for the past year and a half.

I would definitely like to move somewhere else as well but lets see what happens; another European country probably. Moving somewhere outside of Europe is a lot more difficult because of visas. I suppose is another factor as well, is the fact that the freedom of movement means that people can go abroad and study and you can stay and work there if it does work out.

You mean that is a potential factor to make it more interesting?

Yeah it could be yeah, as I said earlier before I didn't learn Dutch but if I had have learnt Dutch to a reasonable standard, I would have considered looking for a job in the Netherlands. I did a one year Masters degree but if I would have done a 2 year degree I would have looked for a job if I had had a bit more time. I was only doing a one year course, so by the time I had finished my thesis it was like time to come home. Not enough time to organise things, rent ran out and everything. So that could be a factor.

Transcription ends at 38 min 35 sec.

Background information

No. of interview?8

MUAP8

Gender? F

First name?

Age? 26

At which university currently studying? Nijmegen

Current degree course and level? Masters Linguistics

When started studying there? S14 - 15

Previous courses followed (if so: what ,where, when, why stopped)? Graduated in 2011 after 4yr Spanish and Chinese BA from Manchester Uni.

Opening questions – home background

Parental address (county)? Berkshire

Describe where grew up as urban, suburban, rural, or no clear answer? Urban

Compared to the UK population in general, financial background wealthier than average, about average, or less wealthy than average? Wealthier than average

Key questions about the interviewee

I'm interested in aspects surrounding the decision to study in the Netherlands. Could you tell me how that happened?

My main reason is that I can't afford to do a Masters in the UK, and I just went on a website, I think it was masters.portal.eu and it just comes up with all the linguistics masters throughout Europe that are taught in English, and my top choice was actually the one at Groningen, but I didn't meet the admission requirements (laughs). And then I applied here, and to Lund in Sweden, I think and one somewhere else, I can't remember now what country it was in.

But the Netherlands was not a particularly important part of my decision, but the course here looks very good and there's loads of research for linguistics going on here, like they have the Max Planck Institute and the Drundes Institute, so out of the ones I applied to this was my top choice, but that was more to do with the

research that goes on here rather than any particular attraction to Dutch culture or anything.

Yeah, so it could have been in another country if it had been the same course and so forth?

Yeah, but also I don't really like living somewhere where I don't speak the language and I don't speak Dutch very well at all, but everyone's English is so good, so for example I wouldn't have wanted to go to somewhere where people don't speak a lot of English and I didn't speak the language, like Croatia or something; I wouldn't have wanted to go there.

So that was an aspect that made the Netherlands more interesting for you?

Yeah, well in China for example, my Chinese was not anywhere near fluent and I didn't really like not being able to communicate easily with everyone, but here, everyone seems to speak perfect English.

Is it just a general feeling of not being comfortable or is there something specific about it?

Uh, yeah, it's just not being comfortable really. I can't ever really feel at home somewhere where I can't communicate competently with everyone.

So let me just check; you didn't have any personal Dutch connections before you came?

No, although I've got a couple of Dutch friends and they said that it's really nice here and that the culture is not so different from the UK, but there was no particular appeal of the Netherlands for me.

Right, so you had these Dutch friends beforehand and that was coincidental..?

Yeah, I just used to work with them.

But it didn't have any influence on your decision?

Well if she'd said that it was horrible here then maybe I would have rethought it, but no...(laughs)

And to what extent was it 100% your own choice or were you persuaded at all by opinions of family or friends?

Erm, no, I would say it was probably 100% my own choice; there was a few courses I was looking at in the UK but that would have involved me taking out a huge loan and I didn't really want to be more in debt. Some people encouraged me to consider that a bit more but I think mostly it was just my own choice.

So you mean, some friends said why don't you stay in the UK?

Yeah, friends who haven't studied abroad as well but saying, oh, do you know how translatable the degree will be. And this was at the best university in the UK, you know, it was really good, but it would not be worth the extra costs for me.

Cause what kind of cost difference are we talking about?

A lot of the linguistics masters in the UK are 2 years instead of 1 year, and it's about 10,000 Pounds a year, so it would have cost me 20 grand, whereas here it's 1900 Euros for 1 year, so that's 1500 Pounds-ish, which is a massive difference.

Yeah. So apart from what you said already, how did friends and family feel once they knew that you were coming here?

I think that they were all quite excited; I mean I had spent a year already studying abroad and they know that I loved it, so no-one was negative, and cos I was excited about it they were all happy for me.

When I came to the Netherlands 23 years ago, it meant that when I wanted to contact people in the UK, it meant I had to write letters or phone, which cost a lot of money then, so obviously it's a lot easier these days, with modern technology. Was that any kind of factor for you that it's easy to stay in touch directly now?

To be honest, I didn't really consider it cos I'm just so used to it being really easy, so I don't know if it hadn't been the case that it would have changed my view. I think probably not, cos even when I was in Mexico in 2009 and it was still really easy to keep in contact with people from the other side of the world, so maybe I would have considered it; it is really important to me that I can keep in contact with my family and my friends back in England. I also quite like being close by, because when I was in Mexico obviously I couldn't come back just for like a weekend or something, whereas I've been here since September and I've been back to the UK in October and at Christmas, and I'm going back in a couple of weeks, so the proximity is kind of important to me, though I think if there had been an amazing course in Australia, I would have gone there. So it's a factor, but quite a minor one, I would say.

Before you applied, did you know that there were some British students who went to the Netherlands to study?

Um, yes, it says on the website that there are all kinds of international students so I assumed that because of the English-taught Masters that there would be other Brits, although I actually don't know very many Brits here at all. I think I know about three people from England. And I've heard a show on the radio as well that was saying, I don't know if it was specifically about Dutch universities but that European universities wanted to recruit more British students, so I thought, actually, that would maybe help my chances of getting accepted, being British, that would tick a box with them (we both laugh).

Yes, because of the higher fees obviously, anywhere offering English language courses, they are thinking why aren't we getting more British students.

I saw an article about it that they are targetting Bachelors students as well. I think I would have been terrified to do that when I was 18; I would not have wanted to move to a new country by myself.

And the barrier is less now, as a Masters student, I guess? You're more mature and experienced?

I'd never lived away from home when I was 18, so moving to a new country I think would have been quite scary, but now I don't care at all.

Were you aware of the principle that there were programmes in English in other countries, such as the Netherlands before you started applying?

I think probably cos I started looking straight after my last degree in 2011, and I don't know if I already knew or that I'd just found out then. I probably already knew when I started searching.

And were you aware that the tuition fees were low?

Yeah.

Is it correct that you can't get a loan in the UK for a Masters?

I think they do some means tested loans, and you can get bank loans, but you can't get preferable rates. I didn't look into it to be honest; even if the rate was good I can't afford to have 20,000 Pounds worth of debt.

So you were aware that you wouldn't get any kind of loan either in the Netherlands I guess?

Yeah.

Before you came to NL, what did you expect it would be like to study in NL?

I thought it would be quite similar to British universities to be honest, as I think, culturally, they're quite similar countries. And I've been to Amsterdam on holiday before, so although I don't think Amsterdam represents the whole of the Netherlands that well (laughs). I don't think I expected it to be too different really; I wasn't sure if their academic standards were going to be higher or lower. When I first got here we had a welcome meeting saying that it was really hard to get above a 7 or an 8 in your grades, a 6 or 7 was what most people seem to get, so the translation from British to Dutch grades was a bit strange for me. It's so hard to get above 70% in England, and anything above that is a first, and it's really hard to get a first. A lot of people get 50; you only have to get 40% to pass, and here you have to get 5.5 to pass. But actually I seem to be doing how I would expect myself to be compared to other people in the class, and yeah, it seems fairly similar.

How studying in NL experienced now? Differences with above?

I really like it, I think Radboud's a really good university. I'm not sure, I did my undergrad at Manchester; I think Manchester is quite exceptionally good standards, so compared to that I would say that the academic standards are not as high, but it's a really good university and my lecturers are all really prominent researchers in their field, and there's a lot of other things going on not directly related to my course, so last week there was a linguistics conference here and there was lecturers from Harvard giving a 3 day colloquium which was really full, and there's kind of guest lecturers each month from people researching various things in linguistics which is really nice so, outside of my course directly there's also a really good environment for extra academic learning.

So those are the things which strike you most?

Yeah, and I don't know if that existed at Manchester or that I just wasn't...erm, I mean I'm sure it did a bit but I think maybe during my Bachelors I wasn't as motivated so I wasn't aware of all the other things that there were, so yeah there's some really good things here.

And anything else about the quality of life and living here?

They seem very caring actually. All the administrators here; all the meetings we've had they been very much like, oh you can come and talk to us and my housemate is British and he's had quite a lot of problems trying to organise his course and the administration have really gone out of their way to try and help him and to try and find solutions, which is really nice.

How did you overcome financial barriers to be able to study here?

I spent the last three years working in London, so I saved some money then. And then I have some other savings I am using as well. And the cost of living is a lot cheaper than what it was in London, obviously, although by European standards it's not that much cheaper comparitavily, but compared to London everything's cheap.

Considered studying at any other universities and countries? If so, which, and what affected choices? If not, why not?

I had never heard of Nijmegen before I found the course, but I'd heard of Groningen, as it has a global reputation as a university. That's why it was my top choice.

So that was a factor in your preferences?

Yeah

If you could turn the clock back, would you have made a different choice, considering what you know now? If so, why and what?

I don't think so, although we'll see when I finish in August how employable I am. If I've been unemployed for a while then I would give you a different answer, but at the moment I'm really happy I'm here. I love being a student again.

What can you tell me about how friends of yours made their decision as to whether to study abroad/in NL or not?

I don't have any friends who have even looked at doing a Masters abroad, from the UK, I don't have any British friends who have considered it. But that is possibly because a lot of my friends work for the NHS and the NHS pay for your education in the UK, so they don't have a actual reason, and also especially working in the medical profession, you want to have a medical qualification which you know is going to be accepted and transferable, so that's possibly why. And also for the people who haven't lived abroad before I think it's probably scarier going elsewhere, Because I'd done it before I knew that I'd love it.

If you were a marketer at a Dutch university, what aspects of studying here would you promote to attract more British students?

I think at the moment people probably want to know how graduates perform, because it's so hard to find a job in most sectors at the moment; so I think marketing the degrees which will make their graduates employable. And also the other aspects of Dutch life outside the university, like the cycling, I love cycling, I've never ridden a bike properly before, and now if I don't cycle for a week I really miss it, although I don't know if that would have attracted me. And I think, just kind of, I think British people can kind of see other countries as being maybe less modern, I'm not sure, so maybe, if universities highlighted the aspects of research that is going on in the universities that would have both, I don't know, I would be a terrible in a marketing job (laughs). I guess that would work for me.

What is your reaction to the following statement? The opportunity to study in the Netherlands, with its low tuition fees, potentially helps British students from poorer backgrounds to be able to afford to study.

Yeah, I agree. Definitely I would agree, and I think that especially now that a Bachelors is 9000 a year, and even though you get a loan for that, I think a lot of people don't want to be in that much debt by the time they're 21, they don't want to have over 30,000 Pounds of debt. So yeah, I would agree.

Would also potentially be true for people from average backgrounds?

Yeah, I think so.

I am interested in the idea as to whether there might be British young people who would like to study but then they think that they can't afford it, but that if they knew about lower tuition fees they might decide to do that.

I think that could be true. I think that there is a problem though in the UK in that there is a lot of research that people from families where their parents didn't go to university are a lot less likely to go to university, not necessarily just financially but because they don't consider it as an option because there's no history of it in their family. My friend used to work for Aim Higher and they went to visit schools and colleges in lower economic income areas and she would try to promote the idea of going to university to these kids, and so many of them would be like oh I didn't really consider that to be an option for me; I don't know anyone who's done it. So I think the problem is not just financial, it's also just promoting university as a valuable thing to do.

Have you got anything else which is relevant to this research which you would like to tell me?

No

Transcription ends at 26 mins 50 sec.

No. of interview? 9

MUAP9

Gender? M

First name?

Age? 22

At which university currently studying? Radboud (Nijmegen)

Current degree course and level? Master's in Economics

When started studying there? S14

Previous courses followed? B.Sc. in Economics at University of

Leicester (2013)

Parental address? Bedfordshire
Type of home environment? Urban
Financial background? Less than average

Transcripts starts at 3 min 12 sec

The main thing I am interested in is the process that you went through in deciding to come and study in the Netherlands, so could you just in your own words tell me about that please?

Well, I think that a key point that attracted me here, well maybe initially I liked the idea of going abroad being able to go abroad, experience a different culture, live abroad, and so that eventually got into my mind that it would be nice to try that. Initially I didn't pursue that and then went into the world of work but then it became an attractive option again. Specifically the Netherlands, what was really attractive about it was the tuition fees. In the UK it would be significantly higher at least 4 or 5 times higher probably, so I valued the international experience more than I would do at home. Then it would just be a continuation of my experience whereas here I can sort of in effect do a year abroad in a way that I didn't do my undergraduate degree so that was a key attraction point. And also the fact that I could do it within one year was interesting.

Where would it be longer then?

In many other countries I've seen. So initially tuition fees was the key driver as I didn't want to spend too much but then they are comparable in Scandinavian countries I believe, where the tuition fees are non-existent or still quite low but then it would be a 2 year course so I wasn't sure if I wanted to invest that much time in this. But yeah, I was happy with the tuition fees.

So those are the main reasons?

Yeah.

You haven't mentioned any personal Dutch connections of any kind?

No. I did have a friend who came out and did something similar last year. It wasn't a key point for me of wanting to do this but seeing that somebody I knew *had* done something similar, made it seem a bit more realistic in making this move. It wasn't a key driver but it was a point.

So that was a British friend?

Yes.

Was it 100% your decision or were you influenced in any way by family?

No, no it was all me who made the decision.

And how did, for example, family feel about you coming here?

Yeah, they were, I think, excited for my prospect of coming here, as in nobody in my inner family has really gone to live abroad before so that was something that I was excited in pursuing and at the time I was working, but I was heading down a carrier path that I was completely

happy with so I thought, this idea of gaining international experience, once it got in my head, it wouldn't really go away so I just had to make the move and pursue it.

And friends, is that the same that they supported you?

Yeah, I guess I haven't been able to see them as much so I don't know their exact opinion, but I think with things like Skype and other social media it is really easy to keep in contact with everyone so that wasn't exactly something that I massively considered just cause I know that other friends have gone off and its been okay in terms of keeping in contact and stuff, so it wasn't like I was worried about it and either way.... (unclear). But I think they were still happy.

Say if you had been in a situation 20 years ago without modern technology, would you still have come?

It's hard to imagine. I dunno, I think in terms of my desire to experience going abroad I don't think that would have been a hurdle, I think I would have still pushed for it. I guess it would have just been a different experience really. Cause the desire to do it and the desire to experience a slightly different life for a bit was interesting.

So you were aware that other British students study here?

Yeah, the idea of doing this came to me many years ago, 2 or 3 years ago. And then I sort of put that aside and thought I'd get a job, whereas my friends decided to pursue that. So I always considered it an option and an interesting option at that. It was interesting being able to just ask a lot of friends how it went really.

Another point in terms of coming here just the fact that English is so highly regarded here, in terms of, a lot of people do speak it here so that was an attractive prospect. I did like the idea of maybe going to other countries like France and Italy and stuff, but it just makes life that little bit easier when 90% of the people can understand you when you speak to them in English, it's just helpful.

So that was an advantage to the Netherlands in comparison to other European countries?

Yeah, I never really tied it to Scandinavia but from what I've read, their level of English is very high as well. But then (inaudible) that it would have been a longer Masters study so in terms of everything, it just fitted together well with the Netherlands like the combination of price, course and culture, really.

At what point did you realise that the tuition fees were significantly lower?

I noted it a few years ago when I was considering my next step after my Bachelors degree and yeah i was just surprised at seeing the Master's fees even for the uni went to at the time when I had got a reduction, it was just so much less that it was infinitely more attractive. Initially I wasn't dead set on the idea of doing a Masters degree but it just kept becoming more and more attractive with the fees and having worked for a year, the

fees were affordable. Yeah that's when I noted it down and it became very attractive.

So, what if this option hadn't have been available abroad for the relatively cheap Masters, if you had had British prices?

I don't think that I would have pursued it, just because I've had the UK university experience and I had a really good time but then I wanted to do something new and so if I hadn't been able to come abroad then I don't really think I would have done that. When I introduced the idea to my friends, they couldn't really understand why I wasn't going to do it in London or something and, I dunno, I feel like I've got a very different mentality to them that that option wasn't ever on the table, I never wanted to spend like £10,000 just to move down to the next big city, over the last few years my mindset has changed on wanting to gain new experience and go abroad and meet new people and stuff.

In a nutshell again, why did they (friends) not understand it?

I don't know, I think maybe having incredibly strong ties in the sense of personal relationships, cause I had my friend and family around me but I didn't have a relationship to make me less geographically mobile in a way, and that's the only thing that I can think, yeah I just didn't completely understand why they would be reluctant to do it but I guess they are just kind of set up where they are really and they are happy with that, which I can understand but I don't really feel that way at the moment.

Before you came to the Netherlands, what did you expect it would be like to study here?

That's a good question. Maybe just the fact that I was carrying on doing economics which is a subject that I do enjoy, I wasn't expecting anything radically different. I guess I never really worked that out, in the sense that it was a fairly quick procession of applying and then having to make a decision in about 5/6 weeks before I came out here of 'will I actually come out here?' and then I decided to leave my job so I never actually had any exact expectations of what to expect really.

No, I wouldn't say that I had been disappointed by what I've experienced, I guess there are some elements that are different from studying in the UK, like it seems a bit more intense as in the level is maybe a bit higher just generally, that is the impression that I have got, but apart from that no I never really had any strong expectations, like, I want to achieve this or this or that to be satisfied, that wasn't really part of what I was thinking.

The higher level that you mentioned, that is the since when you arrived?

Yeah just, maybe it is a very economic perspective, but we deal with a lot of statistics here and in my bachelor degree there was a element of that, but here there are a lot more statistics based and from the impression I got, it was the like that throughout the whole the bachelor degrees here and so that's maybe a little bit different, like, if I hadn't pursued a statistical courses in my bachelor degree then I would would have probably had to have done an extra year. I don't know if they have them in Groningen but

they have a pre-masters here where you have to catch up, in a way, but I didn't have to do that so I think that it is not an incredible step up but it is a bit of a step up in terms of having to raise my level a bit and my productivity and stuff so.

And that's about an intellectual level needed to follow it or is it to do with the quantity of work?

I'd say probably levels of quantity of work isn't too bad, I mean it can be intense at some points but not every single week I'm stressing out about getting stuff handed in, so I'd say yeah more level of the education.

And anything else about being in the Netherlands aside from the study side of it?

What? Just like, comments?

Yeah, just to sum it up, how have you experienced it?

Yeah, it has been good, I mean being on the continent in a way is a new experience for me, so I think the prospect of being able to travel around to see other countries is quite attractive, and also just being able to meet loads of different nationalities, that was initially attractive and also has carried on being a really, really interesting experience. I've learned to appreciate that English is a useful skill to have it as a native language, that's something that never really dawned on me before that it is in effect the big international language that people can connect with which opened my eyes to maybe staying somewhere else abroad in the future so they are all things that have come from my time studying here so it has been an eye opener really.

Just to check the financial aspects; you've indicated that the tuition fee differences are very important and have enabled you to do this?

Yep.

Is there anything else you can say about how it works, did you use savings or...?

Yeah, using a bit of savings and I came into some of my inheritance, so that maybe enabled it to be a bit easier. From what I've realised, doing an Erasmus year is say cheaper in some respects as you do get some money from the university for a year or something, I'm not quite sure. But yeah I've generally managed to make it work. So I think that's been okay in comparison to what I would be paying back home, it is better value for a better experience. And that is how I am viewing it, I know it is a lot and I try not to think about it as a package in terms of living costs and accommodation etc. I'm viewing it as like the experience and it is one year out of my career in a way.

If you could turn the clock back, would you have made a different choice?

How far back to before coming out here?

Knowing what you know now.

No, no, I don't think I would, just no, I wouldn't. Yeah, cause I think I was in a position with work where I wasn't very happy and I felt like I needed to jump in at that point in life otherwise it may be a little bit too late. I've now realised it isn't at all and there are people of all ages doing masters and that is not something that came across in my head before, maybe just because with my friends who had done a Masters, did it straight after university so that was my comparison so, no I wouldn't change it.

I am interested in what you think about other people in a similar position who maybe stayed in the UK?

Yeah, having more ties and not having the desire to go really as in they're settled in the position that they are in. In terms of my friends, I think relationships would be the key thing in terms of not wanting to go abroad, which I can understand as when I have been in relationships in the past I have felt more settled and haven't felt the need to move or see places, but then when it comes to an end, it's like I kind of need to do a bit more with my life and see more places and stuff so yeah that is why.

If you were a marketer at a Dutch university, what aspects of studying here would you promote to attract more British students?

I'd say definitely the tuition fees and I the fact that they are taught in English. The fact there are Masters taught in English, when I introduced the prospect to people, they were like 'oh are you gonna learn Dutch?' partly joking with them, but partly like 'er no, every things actually taught in English out here...' So I think raising that prospect that it's very affordable and it's not too far away from the education system in the UK really, in terms of the continuation of the language at least.

I would probably sell the idea of just getting a new experience in a new city, new country. Yeah, I think they would be the main points.

What is your reaction to the following statement:

I would agree with that. A couple of interesting stories that peaked my interest is the prospect of introducing a loan in the UK for Master's students, cause that was something that I thought never really existed, well I think its more of a new policy, I mean that would have made it a bit more financially attractive staying back home, but still not enough to change from the path that I have taken out here so yeah, I would say from poorer backgrounds that is good, yes.

And what about for average backgrounds?

Yeah I would say the same. I think I'd say I relate more with the poorer backgrounds question, yeah towards the start, so in response to 'does it help poorer people?' yes, I would say it would.

Now that you phrase it like that, I don't really relate to the average, yeah I would say I relate more to the poorer backgrounds.

It seems that the low tuition fees doesn't seem to be that widely known in the UK and i thought that maybe there are people from poor or average backgrounds who decide not to study because of the high tuition fees in the UK with out realising that they could achieve it.

Yeah, I would say that is true, because it is only something that came on my radar from me looking, and if I hadn't pursued it then it wouldn't have come across, and only when I did start looking that it opened up a world of opportunities. I still remember going to an international university fair in the UK about a year ago, and that was interesting but before that, I needed to understand that it still was achievable, by the time I was there I was already fairly clued up about it, so to put across the low tuition fees is pretty key, I think.

Maybe the people here and the people in Europe don't appreciate that it is a lot cheaper here than it is in the UK. That is the sort of impression that I have got. When I say the tuition fees that people are paying and then people are really surprised, and some people are getting unhappy about the tuition fee going from free to slightly more expensive. I think from both sides, the UK students probably need to realise that it is a bit cheaper and also that other countries need to realise that they need to appeal to that. So I think that when that link is made I hopefully that will be quite productive I guess.

Is there anything else which is relevant to this research which you want to mention?

I don't think so. I think I've said most of the points which are relevant.

Transcripts ends at 29 min 38 sec

No. of interview? 10

MAUA10

Gender? M

First name?

Age? 22

At which university currently studying? UvA

Current degree course and level? Master's in Human Geography

When started studying there? S14

Previous courses followed? BA in Geography at University of Newcastle

Parental address? Nottinghamshire

Type of home environment? Suburban

Financial background? Wealthier than average

Transcription starts at 2 min 45 sec.

The main thing I am interested in is the decision process involved in coming to the Netherlands to study, so in your own words, how would you describe that?

Well, the main reason I decided to come was because of, well I was sitting there at work last year, and I remember just (laughs) in my lunch break scrolling down my Facebook and loads of my friends who had just graduated were kind of doing loads of things, seeing the world, so I thought I wanted to do something interesting, so I started looking into things like gap years but a lot of my friends didn't have any money as well so I didn't have anyone to go with so I just started scouting websites looking out if there was any thing interesting that I could do which isn't just kind of aimless travelling with no real goal. I wondering if there was anything that I could get out of it.

Something abroad because I wanted to get out of the UK cause I've not really left the UK apart from going away for holidays to France. So it came up, a blog about free tuition fees in Scandinavia but it was a 2 year masters and not all of them were in English, some how it got me thinking because I had been on a field trip to Amsterdam and it got me thinking, well, I wonder what the tuition fees are like there so I had a look at the website and the tuition fees are 1,900 Euros so obviously I'd never even thought about doing a masters degree in England for the prime reason of the £9,000 and no student loan, It was completely not an option, even though I would have done if I was able to, but its just completely not an option to do it there (England), so then it kind of ticked a couple of boxes that it was a year long course so I could afford to live there for a year with out having to work because as I worked last year I had saved up a lot of money, and then it also meant it also want it was cheap tuition fees, the course is all in English and it would be a really good experience as well, So those are sort of the main reasons as to why I decided to come.

So just to be sure, you didn't have any kind of personal Dutch connections, family or friends?

No not at all, I didn't have any social connections at all.

And was it 100% your own decision or did family or friends have any input?

It was 100% my own, if anything my parents were a bit more hesitant, just because I think they would be a bit more happy with the safe, carry on down the job route. But I was kind getting itchy feet, so I kind of decided to just go for it really. Get a change of scenery, carry on learning as well, something I would...able to do anyway, so yeah it was a good decision really.

I also think it was quite an important age time being 22, having no mortgage to pay, no kids to feed, no commitments at all that I could basically do whatever. I wanted to leave Newcastle cause after 4 years a lot of my friends had left so I wanted a change of scenery so I could literally go anywhere, do anything that I wanted so I thought, before I had got on any kind of job ladder and before I would have to leave a job after earning quite a lot, I thought it was perfect time to go because you wouldn't have to leave any job or get a new house or anything like that.

So your parents were a bit hesitant?

Yeah, more than just because I think maybe cause they are bit older or a bit more traditional but they were kind of, leaving the country and going somewhere for a year I think for them it wasn't the safest option. They would probably rather I just stay in the country get a job and... they are kind of a bit more like that. You know things like travelling or going around the country, they had never done anything like that so I don't think they really get it so much. They smile at the idea but underneath they're a bit like, oh I'm not sure, there isn't much point in doing that; they don't really like the idea of doing that so yeah it was definitely my decision to do it.

Other family or friends, did they have an opinion about what you were doing?

Well, I've got a twin brother and he was like, 'Yeah awesome, I think you should do it,' and my friends were like yeah, sounds like a good idea, a lot of them are kind of hesitant about doing it themselves basically because all the money I have saved up and pretty much spent in this year, I would be going back to England with zero in my account so I think that's one of the reasons that put them guys off, but as an opportunity, they all gave me pretty positive responses really, from all my friends and family. It was only really my parents that were slightly hesitant but they were still quite supportive and everything like that.

To what extent does technology make it easier for you to go abroad?

Yeah, hugely! Cause Skype is one of the best things because its a complete free call and if you have an iPhone as well you get FaceTime which is basically free calling online. I've got a girlfriend in the UK as well so that is a bit of a factor as well to think about, but it means that keeping in contact is no problem at all cause if you get bored you can just quickly get Skype up and its no problem. I do a lot of communicating through Facebook cause you can get an app which is a Facebook message so at the moment I've got an English number but I never use texts or ring any one, I just use Wifi because there is so much wifi everywhere and contact everyone through Facebook as if it was like texting someone, or Whatsapp. So a lot of my communicating is done through that as well, but yeah that is really handy.

So if you could imagine being in my situation 20 years ago, if technology hadn't been around, would you still have come, do you think?

Yeah, I think so, yeah just because when you've got the bug, you need to go do it. I would have thought more hard about it and I think I would have gone back home a couple more times than I have done, because I've only been back once for christmas and that was it so far since September. But I think I would be more hesitant about that, its quite courageous if you think about it kind of just going with out nothing, I think it would have taken me a couple more weeks to settle in if I didn't have a friendly face to talk to on Skype or something like that, cause you are completely on your own once you do something like that.

Were you aware before coming here that there were British students who studied in the Netherlands?

No, no, to be honest there are more British students over here than I thought there would be, it wasn't so much of a factor of me choosing coming over here cause I thought there would be British students, because I wanted to meet other students from other places, so I thought going to a university with university clubs and living in student accommodation like my flatmate at the moment is from Puerto Rico, so it gives you the opportunity to meet loads of people that you would never normally meet.

Although, I do find that when you are over here you do naturally tend to side with some of the English guys. A third of my friendship group probably are English guys, cause you can talk to them about football and things like that. I play for the interational football student network and half the team are English because they love football and stuff so, yeah its automatic. I think hanging out with some of the Dutch guys, if you were in a group they would have to speak English to be polite whereas maybe they want to relax and want to be able to speak Dutch or speak Spanish to each other, but you don't feel like an outsider or anything at all.

Although, I have heard, because of the tuition fees rise, there are a lot of English people coming over here to do masters and things like that and to do bachelor degrees as well, but it wasn't really a factor in choosing to come here.

Your not annoyed by the fact that there are English people here?

No, not really cause it kind of helps you settle, its kind of a little bit like a cushion, especially English guys or British guys cause I know there are a few Irish guys around here as well but its kind of like a safety net, because if you wanna maybe watch Match of the Day on a saturday night or something like that then the English guys are up for it. Also it's nice to kind of move off and meet other people from other cultures.

Did you now before you started looking that there would be English courses abroad?

No, not at all, I had a feeling cause obviously you get Erasmus programmes of British students going over during there bachelors for a year so I thought there must be some degree of English cause they go over there and they don't have to speak the local language, so I thought that there must be some support in study courses but the variety of courses in English was more than I had expected. I thought that there would be maybe a select few courses, and I thought they would maybe run along side Dutch or something, but I found especially doing a masters programmes at the University of Amsterdam but most masters were in English over Dutch, so we have got about 2 thirds of our programme are Dutch people and about one third are international and the Dutch do a lot of their essay writing and presentations in English, and in debates, so its quite a strange thing really.

I had a quick look at courses in Germany or Spain and things like as well that but they were really selective, I thought, so unless you specifically happened to want to do one of those courses in English then that would be okay but otherwise... I've been to Amsterdam twice before and I knew

that obviously everyone speaks English really well its not kind of broken English as well, so I thought it would be alright in social circles, whereas I thought that in other countries their English would be a bit more broken so it might be a bit harder to understand what people are talking about and things like that or if you have any documents about tax or things like that coming in then you could find someone to help you sort it out quite easily.

And did that impression help persuade you that the Netherlands would be a better choice?

Yeah, definitely. It made me feel a lot more confident about going as well, because I knew there would be a lot of people that would speak English and judging by the amount of English courses I knew that there would be a lot of international students, which meant I assumed the international body would speak English as well, because in the UK the international body speak English. I thought that would be quite useful for socialising.

And that has been confirmed essentially?

Yeah.

Did you think that Amsterdam would be any different in that respect to the rest of the Netherlands?

Yeah I thought if anything, it would be more international, and I thought the chances of people speaking English, not just the students, but local Dutch people as well, would be higher. Cause as I said I didn't know much about the rest of the country and since I have come over here I've learnt more. And since I have been here twice before I could visualise what it was like. It wasn't like just completely going into the unknown. Because I had come here on a geography trip as well so I had studied the area before and I had used the tram and things like that so I could really visualise what it would be like so it wasn't like I was going into the unknown as such.

A provincial Dutch city would have been a slight step further?

Yeah yeah, cause I would have had no idea what that provincial city would be like, I wouldn't know if it was a student city or maybe it was a really quiet city, you cant really gauge the feel of it if you'd never been before. And I thought capital city, yeah, it would be a lot more international. So it kind of put my mind at ease a bit more.

Is there anything else which you haven't mentioned which you thought beforehand?

No, I didn't really think in too much detail about it, because when you start thinking in too much detail about everything and then when you get there, every thing is already too thought through and then you start noticing problems so I kind of just though I would go over there, see what I thought, see what its like, I'm only there for a year so if I don't like it, at least I'm doing a masters so I've got something to do over there if I do struggle making friends or whatever, I could visualise it so a lot of it was kind of just winging it.

That quite a good way to do it really, I don't think its good to overthink things.

Is there anything you haven't mentioned about how you now experience it?

Maybe it is more social than I expected cause there are a lot more of a mix of people as well. In Newcastle University and you say there is an international student, you generally assume and stereotype that it is a student from south east Asia or China or something like that, so when I found out I was moving into international accommodation I assumed there would be a lot of Chinese students, but it was really a lot of people from all over Europe and things like that so that was nice. And there is kind of a different culture as well and student culture over here. I think it is kind of political, for example there is the Occupy movement in the university at the moment. When I was in England it less structured and more drinking and things like that.

Crucially, my parents are paying for this accommodation, cause they did it during my bachelors as well and they said that if I'm ever in full time education and I haven't got the means to support myself that they would support me through my accommodation but then its up to me to pay for tuition fees and living costs for the year so I saved up last year maybe £4,500 to try and cover the whole thing but my mum said I have a safety cushion that if I do ever run out of money for whatever reason like my bike breaks a few times, then you could be a couple hundred quid down and she said that if we do ever get to that situation then its not the end of the world, so I've got a feeling she might be putting aside from her paycheque a little bit of money every month just in case when it comes to summer, I might have a month left to live here so that is kind of a safety net and I definitely wouldn't have come if they hadn't have paid for my accommodation. Im not sure I would have come even if I did have the money to pay for my accommodation, I'm still not sure I would have come because it would have been the expense then would have cost me just under £5,000 and then with addition to accommodation then that would have got too expensive and wouldn't have been worth the balance for coming to get a degree over here if I was paying £8,000 for it.

If you could turn he clock back would you have made a different choice?

No, I would have definitely come over here and I would recommend it to other English people who are thinking about doing a masters degree as well. Maybe not so much a bachelors degree, because I think the support networks in the UK universities are really good and its a bit more independent here, or maybe thats just a masters course. But I think the distance is an aspect as well so there may be a lot of people who wouldn't be so suited to it unless you are happy taking care of yourself being quite independent then I would definitely recommend it to other English students as well.

Did any friends of yours who were considering doing a masters, did they think about going abroad?

To be honest, not really cause a lot of my friends didn't even consider masters at all because of the tuition fee rise in the UK. Although they think of me coming over here is a really good idea, I'm not sure they would do it themselves, because if you think of the example of having a pot of 5 grand, you've got a year, you can basically do with that whatever you want, so I chose to come over here and get a qualification and also get a good experience as well, for them, I think if they had a pot of £5,000 I think they would rather go traveling the world for a year or 6 months, something like that.

But I think I worked a little bit harder than those guys so... And I think going to university is quite a good safety structure as well because you are pretty much guaranteed to always make friends, and coming out with a qualification is something to put on your CV instead of just kind of going and slumming it around, so I think a lot of people wouldn't have done that. And the only people I did know who did a masters in the UK, a lot of those guys went to private school and I didn't, so obviously they are used to their parents paying £9,000 a year potentially when they were going to private school for their whole education, so to them, for their parents to pay £9,000 to do a masters probably wouldn't be such a big deal. For my family for example there would be no way £9,000 for a masters.

So they didn't need to look for cheap tuition fees abroad, for example?

Exactly yeah, I don't think they would have even considered it cause a lot of people on my course who did stay and do a masters, a lot of them stayed in Newcastle or went to London to do one, but for them, I don't think money was such an issue because that was kind of just the norm of payment for your education, but obviously for me, it would have been a much bigger issue. There would be no way my parents would fork that out for me, I wouldn't even want to ask them.

If you were a marketer for a Dutch university, what aspects of studying in the Netherlands would you promote to attract more British students?

A new experience and a fresh outlook would be a really good one I think, you know, coming to a new place that is vibrant, but then I would also say it is not so far away that it is like the other side of the world. And then I would also really sell that masters programmes are all in English. And the cheap tuition fees. I think those reasons are the real selling points, especially to other people I think the tuition fees would be huge because I could live out here for a year and if I paid for everything myself it would still be cheaper than just paying for tuition fees for a masters in the UK so I think that would be a huge, huge thing.

What is your reaction to the following statement: The opportunity to study in the Netherlands, with its low tuition fees, potentially helps British students from poorer backgrounds to be able to afford to study?

No, I wouldn't agree with that because you don't get any loan, and if you are from a poorer background I dunno how you would then afford housing and if needed it then they could help me out but I think if you are

from a poorer background, maybe some sort of student loan arrangement you kind of need because, you know, when you see the money transfer from the money coming from the government into your bank, then you are using that as a loan and its like all your hard earned money is then leaving your bank and suddenly going away, so I think if you have a look at the statistics of people coming over here, I imagine it would be mainly middle class British students coming over here.

Poorer people cannot afford it at all so you need that several thousand that you have talked about?

Yeah I think you need that, I mean I had a year out working as well, so I think you would have to have some sort of work or some sort of money behind you to be able to do it. Also doing for example, a bachelors degree in England, because at least that you then get the loan. The idea is that you can go to university without a penny to your name, over here you definitely have to have a few grand to your name before coming here and doing it. I think it would be really appealing to more middle class people who had money behind them but it would be a massive put off to people who didn't have money behind them.

So if the sentence was from average or middle class backgrounds, it would make more sense?

Yeah that would make more sense. Obviously it would be such a selling point but actually I think that would be more accurate.

Is there anything else you can think of which might be relevant to this research which you haven't mentioned yet?

I don't think so. I think I've touched upon most of the key issues really. I think that's about it really.

Transcription ends at 32 min 35 sec.

No. of interview? 11
MAUA11

First name?

Gender? M

Age? 23

At which university currently studying? UvA

Current degree course and level? Master's in Human Geography

When started studying there? S14

Previous courses followed? University of Leeds (2014)

Parental address? Bristol

Type of home environment? Suburban

Financial background? Average

Transcription starts at 2 min 58 sec

The main things which I am interested are related to the process that you went through in deciding to come to the Netherlands to study, so could you tell me about that in your own words please?

Yeah, it was a pretty spontaneous decision to be honest. I kind of got to, I think March last year and I just thought, like, what am I going to do? I'm going to graduate in June, and I thought ok, well I want to do a masters kind of course, and then the obvious things like it is so expensive to do it in England, so like, where else can I do it? I have always thought I wanted to do study and live abroad, and then the idea kind of grew on me and it was just a narrow down process that I'm sure every one's saying, like, see where you can do an English course and see where the course is that you really want, and using those criteria, there was pretty much only the Netherlands, and then it was choosing a place in the Netherlands. I applied to Utrecht and Amsterdam and I chose Amsterdam just because its a big city and I knew I wouldn't get bored and like you cant go to Amsterdam and not have a good time, you know what I mean, so I kind of did it for that. And I looked at the course which was pretty interesting and I also knew it would open quite a few doors for me because, escaping England and cause I was getting a bit tired of the mundane consistencies of life over there and stuff, I like meeting new people.

Which other countries did you look at?

I looked at Belgium, I looked at Germany, but there wasn't really a geography course that I really wanted to do at either of them and then there was only a geography course in the Netherlands if I can remember correctly, yeah it was just picking where in the Netherlands that I wanted to study or wanted to apply to.

So, just to check then, you didn't have any personal connections; Dutch family or Dutch friends?

Friends yeah, I knew some Dutch people previously who I had met travelling and stuff like that who kind of helped settle me in and I met them here for drinks and stuff like the day after I arrived, and now actually, one of them has offered me her place over the summer because she is going away so she said, if you haven't got anywhere to stay then I'm gonna rent out my place, do you want it, for 400 Euros a month, and its pretty central Amsterdam, like its pretty good, yeah so.

Those friends then, is that like a bonus or did that actually influence your decision in any way?

More of a bonus, I would say.

Was it 100% your decision to come or were you influenced in any way, for example family?

No, not at all, it was 100% my decision. I told my mother and she supported it, I mean I was 22 and old enough to make my own decisions and stuff like that.

And friends? How did they feel about you coming here?

They had supported it as well, a lot of them have been over here and I actually haven't been over here before I came out for good but yeah most of my friends supported me coming out here and they all said 'ah, what an amazing city and how jealous and stuff they are' yeah so, really supportive.

Technology, easy access and easy contact, did that make it easier to come here? Was that a factor do you think?

No, I would say no, because I get tired of technology and sometimes I just want to throw my phone in a canal and stuff like that so I think it stresses me out, but no it wasn't a factor at all I don't think. I guess, related to access, I guess you could say because the flight time to Bristol is 50 minutes, so although its not directly related internet access or contact, its like, my mum who lives alone, if she ever got ill, or I needed me to be home for one reason or another like I could just get on a flight that day and 50 minutes later id be there. If I leave my house in Amsterdam and get to my house in Bristol I could get there in like 3 hours if I really wanted to, so I guess related to access that was the most important thing, rather than messaging people.

Did that affect your decision coming to the Netherlands you think? If there was another identical country a lot further away, would you have come?

Yeah, okay it was an advantage. It wasn't a key factor in the decision making but it was one of those things in the back of my mind like, yeah it is still close to home and I can get home really easily if I needed to come home for one reason or another. But I wasn't thinking like yeah okay the Netherlands, it was just gonna be like moving to London or something.

If modern technology wasn't available you would be just as likely to have come here or go abroad?

Yep. Yeah I agree with that.

Before you started looking, were you aware that there were British students who study abroad?

Yep.

And were you aware that there were some programs in English?

Yeah, I was aware.

From any particular source or just general knowledge?

Just general knowledge I would say and yeah just meeting people and talking to people. I knew the Netherlands particularly has a very high fluency rate of English and I know the people are very kind of, we speak in English because it makes more sense and were taught in English because it makes more sense like, apart from Surinam or some Dutch island somewhere its like, yeah, I mean English is kind of first language of the world i guess so it makes more sense.

And the tuition fees are a lot lower in the Netherlands compared to the UK, did you know that before you started looking?

No, I don't think I did actually. I knew they were low, but I didn't realise how significantly low they were and when I found out that they were as low like a tenth of the price for a masters in England, like WOW that really was a big factor in my decision making.

If you had stayed to do a masters in the UK, would you have applied for a student loan there?

Yeah.

And you don't get that here do you?

No, I don't get that here.

And you knew that before coming or looking here?

Yeah, I knew that and I worked last year anyway so I had enough money. I actually had a lot of money still left from my student loan that I got in my bachelor and various bursaries and things like that so I had enough but I could do with a job in the summer.

And about the financial aspects, then so you had some money left over, what else was necessary to be able to make it work that you obviously had to spend several thousand in order to be here.

Just the money that I made last year and the money still had from my student loan that I got in my bachelors, that's how I made it work financially.

With out that would you have been able to make it work?

Definitely not, without my student loan from the bachelors I wouldn't have been able to come out here.

Thinking back before you came to the Netherlands, what did you expect it would be like to study here?

I don't know. I mean, I had a look at the course and it was very similar even though the structure is slightly different but in terms of work load and the content of the course, it was quite similar to what I did in my bachelors so I did my studying before I came and knew what I'd brought self into and there hasn't been any real surprises, yeah I could say it is what I expected.

Anything else about living in Amsterdam, what would you say about it?

Yeah it's okay, the price of living not that bad, I thought it was gonna be worse than it actually is, it's not like living somewhere like London, and obviously it is high for a lot of people in Europe, but for Brits it's not ridiculous I guess. I like just getting on by bike everyday and going outside and it's a good city to go exploring and go sit in some cool cafes or bars or go for a little walk or something. The more time you spend here the more

places you know as well and outside the stereotypical tourist zones and yeah, its cool.

If you could turn the clock back would you have made a different choice?

Nope.

And thinking about friends or acquaintances of yours that are in a similar position to you who last year were thinking about doing a masters perhaps, how many of them looked at going abroad?

Little to none, I would say.

Why is that do you think?

Because people like to be in their comfort zone and they doth like to do stuff that some people may consider it was quite 'blag' (winging it) Some people said 'oh you've made such a brave decision' But for me it wasn't so much of brave decision but a logical decision. I had decided yeah i don't want to be in England much more and wanted see something new and test myself and I didn't want to look back when I'm 40 or something and just be like 'ah crap, I had the chance to go abroad and study and that is really unique opportunity, and its really easy to do now, I didn't want to look back and have just moved to London and got a crap job in recruitment or something.

A lot of it is laziness I would say, and wanting to stay in their comfort zone. Not even thinking about it, to go study abroad, like it is not even an option.

So you are saying that they didn't even know about the possibility of going abroad?

No, I mean maybe they knew but just didn't consider it. I don't even have that many friends that are doing a masters course and stuff like that. Most of my friends now just work, work in Bristol or work in London. Maybe I might have inspired some people to do it?

If you were a marketer at a Dutch university, what aspects of studying in the Netherlands would you promote to attract other British students?

Obviously the language, the ability to mix with a new culture, and obviously the university is very international. On my course, there are about 7/8 different nationalities and there are 25 of us so its really diverse and multicultural university.

—And do you mean not specifically in Amsterdam, but in a Dutch university?

Would that be different? Amsterdam and other universities?

Yeah, I think it would be different because Amsterdam you know, it's the name isn't it, that kind of pulls people in more than probably any other city in the Netherlands, so maybe Amsterdam has got enough International and English students but maybe the other universities, don't purely because they think the Netherlands and then Amsterdam, they don't know there is a number of other cities. You could have a good university experience here. If it was specifically Amsterdam I would promote the city as well.

Would that be less of the case with maybe an unknown or lesser known city?

I mean, obviously you would still promote the city slightly, but like I said Amsterdam really is quite far greater than the other cities in the Netherlands I'm sure. And I would also promote that the course content is very similar and the work load is very similar for that kind of university.

That might attract people because it's less different?

Yeah I would say that because I think I told some of my friends that were coming out here and they were like 'oh I've heard its so much work to do and stuff like that, but its really not the case. The workload is similar.

**What is your reaction to the following statement:
The opportunity to study in the Netherlands with its low tuition fees, potentially helps poorer students from British back grounds to be able to afford to study.**

Yeah, I would agree with that, I mean it's saved me easily £9000. Okay I haven't got a student loan but that would just be more money that I have to pay back in the future. And I was fortunate to get quite a big loan on my bachelor, and bursaries and I really think it is a bit opportunity for someone from a poor background to study here because its not even that hard to get a job, I mean I know some English people here who have got a job and stuff and I guess if you really wanted to... And like I said the cost of living is not too bad, certainly not compared to the south of England, yeah, so I really think it is an opportunity for people from poorer backgrounds to come study here but like I said previously, you just think, oh I'm moving to the Netherlands; that is gonna be so expensive as a student. When you actually look into it is like no, staying in the UK would be really expensive as well, but even more expensive. People say that you have to spend money on getting there like flights and stuff, but it's like a drop in the ocean.

Is there anything else which you think might be relevant to this research which you haven't mentioned yet?

No, I can't think of anything.

Transcription ends at 21 min 47 sec

No. of interview? 12
MAUA12
Gender? F

First name?
Age? 24

At which university currently studying? UvA
Current degree course and level? Master's Sociology (Gender, Sexuality and Society)
When started studying there? S14
Previous courses followed? Bachelor in Politics (2011)

Parental address? Fife
Type of home environment? Rural
Financial background? Average

Transcription starts at 6 min 25 sec

I am interested in how you got from looking for a Masters to do to choosing to come to the Netherlands. So could you tell me about that in your own words please?

Sure. So, originally I never wanted to do a Master's (laughs). I don't particularly enjoy studying; it feels a bit abnormal. But after working a while and the job market being quite competitive, it made sense to kind of take a plunge and go back and do that, so there were a few courses that I looked at, but the main push for Amsterdam was financial reasons because the tuition fees are just so much cheaper. There was an alternative course at the university of Manchester, but the tuition fees alone, are around £6,000 so... which is a lot of money. In Pounds we pay just over £1,500. I can't, remember what it is in Euros, I think its something like 1,900, and something, Euros.

Yeah, big difference, okay.

And, I also just love Amsterdam, I have come over here a lot with my parents, and also made new friends and stuff, so it was just just sort of a prime opportunity, and to live here as well. So it made financial sense, cause the living costs here, I don't think are much more than the UK.

So, you knew Amsterdam already, and let me just check other things, just in case there is anything else, so you haven't mentioned any personal Dutch connections you have with people, as such?

Prior to coming here, no.

And to what extent was it you own decision, 100%? or did family or friends have any influence on it?

I was 100% my own decision, yeah.

But how did family and friends feel about you coming here?

Well it is my parents' favourite city, so they were absolutely over the moon! (laughs) They have already been over quite a few times to visit, and take advantage.

So, they were very positive?

Very positive!

And friends, who are still in the UK or somewhere else?

Yeah, the same, I would say the same, very positive, I think as well because it is a lot closer than India as well.

Yeah, that is not quite the same as me, because I initially went to Spain, to teach English and when I decided to come here, it seemed and felt like coming back to northern Europe, to something more similar. I mean, I loved Spain, but it meant that it was easier to acculturise.

Yeah, yeah, that is the thing, it is much easier. Did you learn Spanish then?

I tried, I was in Catalonia for 5 years so it wasn't the greatest place but I got a little way....

And when I came here 22 years ago, I could only keep in contact with people in the UK by writing letters, or expensive phone calls. So obviously that is something different now.

Very different.

Did that have any effect on you, do you think? That is is easy to keep in contact?

No I don't think, erm... people just take these sort of things for granted so, no it didn't have a big impact actually. Never thought of that. Yeah because I Skype my parents quite frequently and things, and I have a smart phone so, Whatsapp and things are free to use; yeah it is inexpensive.

Can you imagine if you were in a situation say 20 years ago and that wasn't available, would that have been a more difficult choice to come here?

No, I don't think so, no I think that I still would have done it, yeah. Writing letters is fun, you have to appreciate snail-mail.

Because in India was it just as easy to keep contact or was it just as difficult?

It was easy actually, the internet connection was better than what I've had in Fife so... (laughs) Funnily enough. But it was just power cuts and stuff constantly making the communication a bit difficult. But I did send letters, and presents and stuff home. But you always had easy access to Skype, if need be.

Okay. Before you chose to start looking at coming to Amsterdam, did you know that there were already some British students in the Netherlands studying?

No. No it wasn't clear to me until I arrived here, and I paid for a masters introduction so it meant that every one from, kind of the same faculty and stuff met up to do social activities and things and when we met up, lots of

people in my group were actually British and I was really disappointed. (laughs) I don't know, you expect a bit more of an international experience and you arrive here and everyone is the same as what you are used to. So yeah, I had absolutely no idea until I got here.

So you were disappointed and is it still, a shame, do you think?

No, I mean we are good friends now, and I think it helps eventually to have that home connection. Because, one of my friends is American and she definitely misses a lot of the kind of cultural stuff. Because there are not very many Americans as such, that we have in contact with, but yeah I noticed that she misses it so I think I'm quite lucky in that respect actually.

So, if you have had the choice you would have been even keener to... I don't want to put words in your mouth here but...

Yeah, that if I think that I had known that there would be more international students, yeah I think I would have been excited a lot more, and I think I took it for granted, expecting it to be that way. Yeah.

Before you started looking at Amsterdam or the Netherlands did you know that there were programs in English in the Netherlands?

Just through doing research on other countries and I came across it that there were. And I just sort of thought that that would have been the case, and it was. Because I think I had had a look at Sweden and perhaps Denmark I think as well, because they don't pay tuition fees, so I had a look there first. Yeah and they had programs in English so yeah I assumed that it would be in the same in those kind of countries.

And if they were free, why didn't you choose them, then?

They didn't have the course that I wanted and, to my knowledge, living costs there are a lot more.

Before you started looking did you know that the tuition fees were so low?

No, I didn't. Just because it varies across countries as to if the the tuition fees are subsidised and stuff like that, so I wasn't sure how much it was gonna cost. It was a very pleasant surprise.

I don't know what the situation is in Scotland, could you have gone to a British university to do a masters, could you have got a student loan?

No. The British government actually don't offer any support for a Masters. They have career and professional development loans, but because my course doesn't directly lead to employment, I am not of interest to them, so they wouldn't have given me any money.

You are just doing it for fun?

Yeah, yeah. (laughs)

And what about the Bachelors that you did in Glasgow, did you have to pay tuition fees for that?

No, in Scotland it is always free for an undergraduate. Except for living expenses.

Does that also apply to English students, who go to there? Nobody has to pay?

No, it is only Scottish, and the rest of the UK has to pay.

Do many English students go to Scotland now?

When I was there they did because the tuition fees were a lot cheaper than they were in England. And you still have that sort of Ivy League system in the UK, where universities are backed by either red brick or Russel Group and all that nonsense so, It was easier to get access to those universities with the tuition fees being less.

And also, I think, when the Conservative government came in and they sort of messed around with the tuition fee sort of upping the payments and fees have all gone up. So, I don't know if there are still as many English students in to Scotland, I think that there might be. Because they (Scotland) have kept the fees to the lower end, I think most most universities now are charging almost £9,000 per year, which is terrible.

So presumably then you knew that there wouldn't be any student loans available coming here to the Netherlands?

Yeah, I had had a look online at the University of Amsterdam, and they have not got a lot of information in terms of what you can get from the Dutch Government, and I did a lot of research in terms of online forums and stuff from students that have been here before and they were saying that it is really difficult to get any funding, if you are an EU student in particular from outside the Netherlands, they are really difficult to get. The Dutch government have put a lot of restrictions on it, I think, so it was something I ended up not pursuing further.

Before you came to the Netherlands, what did you expect that it would be like coming to study here?

What did I expect? I think that I was more concerned about doing the Masters because I knew that the life style here quite well, cause I have visited a lot as a tourist. Yeah, I knew that I would enjoy that aspect of it and then it was mostly the study load that concerned me but it has not actually been as bad as I thought it would be but I don't know if that is just because I have been able to cope with it.

But I also expected it to be, I feel like the Netherlands sort of projects this image of being very bureaucratic and organised and I think that it is just the University of Amsterdam that is beyond chaotic. Its is somehow very chaotic, it makes life very difficult, and they don't cater to the international students very well at the university.

Yeah, I have heard that more actually, about the University of Amsterdam.

I don't know if it is just the campus that we are based at, because when we all started using it fully in September, when we all arrived, and they were just not equipped and putting information up in November still and putting English translations next to things. Like things as simple as printing is an absolute nightmare. It is not great.

Have you experience any thing of the political upheavals up there?

Do you mean in terms of the protests?

Yes.

Not so much, and I have had conversations with people that I am friends with actually, and they were saying that. Because I don't feel particularly affiliated with the university and it could just be because we are here for a year, and I don't know if it is because a lot of time is spent studying in your own time, then you are not really immersed in the university culture as such.

So I haven't seen much but my friends are very active but I just think it is because they enjoy a good protest. I have kept up with it online and they have kept us updated with it by email. But, yeah it is always financial isn't it, so. We had the same problems at Glasgow when I was there and it just feels the same as when I was there, so....

Anything else to mention any particular things that you enjoy or don't enjoy there?

In terms of lifestyle? No, I enjoy the bike culture, it is quite refreshing, it was scary at first until you get used to it, and then develop the skill of drunk cycling.

I do quite enjoy living here when I do. I find it quite difficult sometimes, and I feel like I also relate things to India, you know, when you just go outside and you nearly take off half of the bike path and that sort of stuff, I just feel like in Britain we are so anal about these things that you have to have a warning for about 28 days and stuff but there is some stuff that is really a bit mad here, but I like it.

And you explained that the financial reason was the most important reason for you to come here, how have you managed to make that work because you have obviously had to pay a few thousand, or invest a few thousand so was that from savings or?

Yeah with savings, I had saved up a fair bit of money just through working and then, yeah my parents also had some money that they had saved up for me, very kindly. Just to cover the rest of it so, yeah.

If you could turn the clock back, would you have made a different choice, considering what you know now?

No, I would have made the same choice, yeah.

And I don't know whether it applies to you but I am interested in any friends or fellow students that you know from Scotland and the UK who have thought about or have chosen to do a Masters somewhere, did they think about going abroad at all?

Out of my friends, I think most have done the same sort of thing as what I did, and they have researched what was available and then I think everyone has flagged up the financial aspect of it, I mean it is a reality isn't it so.... And I think that most people have said that that was there main reason, particularly, for not staying in the UK. And because also it looks good on your CV, because it is an international experience at the end of the day.

So you are saying that British people you know have also chosen to study abroad?

Yes.

And particularly to the Netherlands or....?

Yes, to here in Amsterdam. Yeah, I don't know any others that have gone elsewhere actually.

So you knew Amsterdam, would you have considered other Dutch cities?

I don't think so, no. I think coming here now and hearing about the likes of Leiden or Utrecht that have a very good name. But for me again it was the course, cause it was a very specific course I was looking for, and it this sort of gender side of things is generally offered at other places, but it was particularly the sexuality aspect that I was looking for, and it is not a course that is offered in many other places, particularly within sociology, it tends to be more within psychology and other fields, so.

But if it had been offered somewhere else would you have considered another Dutch city?

Yeah, yeah, I would have.

So the fact that it is Amsterdam, which you know and like and obviously has particular attractions, that is an added bonus then?

Yes, it is an added bonus.

If you were marketer at a Dutch university what aspects of studying in the Netherlands would you promote to attract more British students?

I am not sure. I would probably go for the life style side of things. Here, the kind of cafe culture; the city feels like a very healthy city to be, because even during your daily commute, you are active and sort of things and I think that is all quite attractive. If you didn't do the financial stuff cause that doesn't always look great from that end. The lifestyle here and stuff.

You mean that you could promote that fact that it is cheaper but you think that that could come over in a negative way?

Yeah, because like it is “cheap” or something. Because the money side of things isn’t for everyone. Some people can afford a lot more and stuff. And I think that the reputation of the University of Amsterdam, it has quite a good reputation.

You think that that could be used as a promotional tool?

Yeah.

**What is your reaction to the following statement:
The opportunity to study in the Netherlands, with its low tuition fees, potentially helps British students, from poorer backgrounds to be able to afford to study.**

Yeah I would agree with that. My parents are very much working class if you were doing the social class side of things, and it definitely gave me the opportunity to think, and yeah I agree with that.

Is there anything else you can think of which you’d like to mention which you haven’t talked about already?

No, not that I can think of.

Transcription ends at 26 min 30 sec.

No. of interview? 13
MAUA13

First name?

Gender? F

Age? 24

At which university currently studying? UvA

Current degree course and level? Master’s in Sociology (Social problems and policy)

When started studying there? S14

Previous courses followed? BA in Sociology at University of Sussex (2012)

Parental address? London

Type of home environment? Urban

Financial background? Average

First part of transcription starts at 1 min 32 sec

It’s nice in Brighton, but I’m from London, so I prefer London. They are different. And Amsterdam is somewhere in between.

Discussion of University of Sussex and other parts up to 4 min 2 sec doesn’t need transcribing.

I like living here (Amsterdam) cause it’s like a city university; a nice feel.

Main transcription starts at 4 min 2 sec.

The main question I'm interested in is how you got from the position that you were maybe thinking about doing a Master's somewhere to deciding to come to the Netherlands. So if you can tell me about that in your own words?

I had two friends who studied at Utrecht from 2012 to 2013 and did the Master's. One girl that I had met in London when I had graduated and I went to visit and I felt like they were having a good time.

But I wasn't sure if I wanted to do a masters. So, then I went to South America travelling on my own for 7 months and I got back, and I didn't know what I wanted to do.

My mum was quite keen for me to do a masters, but obviously the fees in the UK are like really high and London is extortionate, so we came to an agreement that if I could apply to go to Sweden or Denmark or Germany or somewhere where the fees are cheaper. That was basically the main thing, but I wanted to come back to the Netherlands because I had seen my friends here and I had enjoyed it. Cause I applied to Utrecht as well.

So it was the fees that were the main thing but also I had seen my friends had had a good experience, that is quite a pushing point for me. And, also I didn't actually know what I wanted to do in terms of a career yet, I was 22.

Apart from the people you have already mentioned, you didn't already have any personal Dutch connections already did you?

Yeah, I have spent a lot of time in Friesland when I was younger. Near Leeuwarden but not quite, I don't know exactly where it is, like in the middle of nowhere, but my family friends, my dad's family friends live there. I came here quite a few times when I was a child and then I didn't come here until I visited Utrecht from when I was about 8 until when I was about 21. There was a period when I was younger when I came a few times.

To what extent was it your own decision, was it 100% your own?

I would say about 90% my own and 10% my mum. She just wanted me to do a masters, she wanted what my sisters did. I only have 1 other sister and she has always been quite keen for me to have that back up degree. My mother is funding me, well my parents are both funding me but my mum is mostly.

And you mentioned the two friends that were here?

Yeah, I mean, I just asked them for advice, I guess that would be a contributing factor as well. Maybe 80% - 5% to my mum and 15% to my friends. They were quite helpful. But mostly I just saw what there was and that is just what I wanted.

You are implying that your parents and sister were supportive about you coming here?

Yes.

And other friends?

Yeah, everyone has just been really supportive of me coming here; they think it's a good move. And because Amsterdam is like the cool city every one is like, wow, that is amazing!

Was that part of the decision? Would just as easily have come to a provincial city?

No, I wouldn't have gone to a provincial city, Utrecht was about as small as I was willing to go. Cause after Brighton, I felt slightly regretful that I had been somewhere so small. It was too small for me to live in, I mean, I like visiting it but when I visited it I thought, oh, I would like to live here, but when I lived there I wasn't that happy.

I think that I wanted to come to a slightly bigger city, but the course at Utrecht was slightly different and I couldn't balance and then I decided to go with the city that I liked, and I liked Amsterdam. I liked Utrecht but I thought that it would be better to make the decision of going to a bigger one this time, and I think I have made the right decision.

And when I came here 23 years ago, I could only keep in contact with people in the UK by writing letters, or expensive phone calls. So obviously that is totally different now, to what extent does that make it easier to make the decision to come abroad?

Yes, I have studied abroad before for an Erasmus when I was 19, in Prague, and that was another contributing factor to why I came here, now I think about it. I did Erasmus and really enjoyed it and I was aware that the Masters was going to be a lot more serious but I enjoyed the study abroad experience itself but in terms of keeping in touch with people, I guess I would have maybe felt differently if I didn't have the communication, if the levels were not the same. I guess with writing letters and making phone calls, I would have struggled more, and I don't think that I would have come.

So I guess that you already knew that there there were programs in English. Maybe because of your...

friends, that is the only reason I knew. Because I had met her in the summer and she was like I am going to Utrecht the university and I said well, I have never heard of that place. And I asked if you had to learn Dutch and she said 'no, it is taught in English' and that was when I knew, because before that I did not realise.

Would the same apply to friends and fellow students in the same place, did they have lack of knowledge of that? That that is normal that people do not know it's taught in English?

Yes, I get asked a lot whether it is taught in English or not, where as for me I just assume that every one would know, which is obviously not true. But I am just like no, it is taught in English! Because all the Dutch people ask me why I haven't learnt Dutch, and I say because I am here to do an English speaking course and the fees are cheaper.

When did you find out that the tuition fees were so low? Was that when you visited your friends in Utrecht?

No, I had done some research afterwards and saw that it was like a tenth of the cost in London, which is a massive difference.

Is it correct that still, if you were doing a Masters in the UK then you wouldn't get a student loan? or has that changed?

They don't have student loans; they have a career development loan which they do not give out to everyone, you have to write an application for a bank loan and I wasn't willing to put myself at risk like that because after, I would have no idea what financial position I would be in, whether I will get a job which I probably won't, straight after I finish, so that was not an option for me. So, if I would have not done a masters if I would have had to get the career development loan. I was just fortunate enough that my parents were willing to help me. They are both retired though, so it has been quite difficult, because we don't have that much money.

So you were aware that you wouldn't get a student loan in the Netherlands either?

Yeah, yes. I knew that, because I had tried to look for grants and things like that, because that would obviously be helpful but there just wasn't anything, unless you are Dutch. Then you get free trains and everything.

So, you have been able to basically make it work because of your parents supporting you, that is the main way basically?

That was the only way. I had saved some money myself but obviously not enough.

And before you came to the Netherlands, what did you think that it would be like to study?

I didn't think that it would be as tough. I thought that I would find it easier because English was my first language and there would be people for whom it wasn't and I thought that I would have much more of an advantage than I do.

That is strictly not true. There are people that struggle with English and it is obviously more difficult to write long essays if your first language isn't English.

I have found that the University of Amsterdam is quite unorganised and well known for being a mess but I did not know that until the first introduction here when I got here and I was like, Great! Every one made jokes about it and I was didn't quite get it but now I have had some quite bad experiences here now and made me see that actually, yeah.

Maybe it is because I didn't know the history of that university really, or what it was known for, I just knew that it was a good university with a good program that I had wanted to do.

Any thing else that has surprised you in a positive or negative way, living in Amstersdam?

It quite surprised me how much I have enjoyed the smallness of the city. I mean this is big for a lot of people but for me this is very small, but it is perfect because when I lived in Prague it was much smaller than Amsterdam, I think it was 4,500 people or something. Still feels small but in a nice way, that surprised me that it is big enough because I wondered, oh is it going to be too small for me? But it is not, so that has been the most surprising thing for me. And also I didn't realise how much I would enjoy cycling around. I was too scared to get on my bike at first especially because everyone here is quite aggressive but then you turn into that person too once you get started.

If you could turn the clock back, would you have made a different choice?

I might have gone to Utrecht instead, but I probably wouldn't have, because of the organisation.

Is there anything else about friends or acquaintances, when there were deciding to do a Masters, you said that a lot of people do not know about the possibilities to study in English here? Did any of them consider studying abroad at all?

No, but since I have been here, some have thought about it, but a lot of them are in career jobs so they are like 'should I drop that that and come over and do that?' And also, they need to save, and they live in London and the rent is high, etc.. They didn't know before but now they know, but I think generally, people would stay in the UK.

But you are saying that if they knew about the possibilities, some of them might come?

Yeah, I think that if they advertised it more, there would certainly be more Brits who would come over to Holland.

If you were marketeer at a Dutch university, what aspects of studying in the Netherlands would you promote to attract more British students?

I would emphasise the fee difference between the two countries, and also the city itself as a deciding factor, because the university is a bit of a mess, so I wouldn't want to be emphasising that too much.

And I guess, the English speaking thing, because nobody really knows about it. I only know about it because of my friends and if it were perhaps, advertised then it would be helpful and attract more British students.

Do you think that fellow potential students would feel the same as you and all really particularly like to move to Amsterdam?

Probably, I mean I have spent a tiny bit more time in the Netherlands than they have, so I don't really know, but I think Amsterdam is attractive.... Everybody is like 'Amsterdam! We can go to coffee shops'. You can do that everywhere, but there you think of Amsterdam, and people don't know about other want to come and visit. People don't know about other cities. I only knew about it cause of my Dad. Many people do not know about other cities apart from The Hague in Holland, so I think Amsterdam to lots of people is the most attractive. It's the deciding factor for many people.

**What is your reaction to the following statement please:
The opportunity to study in the Netherlands, with it's low tuition fees, potentially helps British students, from poorer backgrounds to be able to afford to study.**

I agree.

Is there anything else you can think of which might be relevant to this research which you'd like to tell me?

Not really.

Transcription ends at 23 min 45 sec.

No. of interview? 14
MAUA14
Gender? M

First name?
Age? 25

At which university currently studying? UvA
Current degree course and level? Master's in Public International Law
When started studying there? S14
Previous courses followed? Bachelor's in Scots Law at University of Glasgow

Parental address? South Ayrshire
Type of home environment? Suburban
Financial background? Average

Transcription starts at 4 min 53 sec

The main thing I am interested in is, in the period in which you were considering doing a Master's somewhere in the world, how did you come to the decision to come to the Netherlands to study?

Well, I'd wanted to do a Master's since I graduated; I graduated in 2011.

The kind of main reason I didn't immediately go into a masters was financial, just that I couldn't afford to go straight into another course, so I

worked for 3 years after graduation from 2011-2014, and during that time I was still considering the masters.

After I finished doing an Erasmus programme in Stockholm, that kind of inspired me to definitely study abroad again, just for the sort of, culturally different aspect. So that was definitely one of the main reasons.

I would say that, and the financial, so once I actually started looking a year ago or so, I kind of ruled out doing one in the UK and Scotland based on the fact that it was much more expensive than here, and I just sort of wanted to study somewhere different to get a new fresh perspective on things.

A few of my friends from my undergraduate degree had studied here immediately after graduation, and they said that they had had a good time here and the course, and it was basically the same course that I am doing now so I had that in my mind, but I didn't automatically go here, I spent quite a bit of time looking internationally in general.

I sort of quickly ruled out places like the States and Australia and these places just for the cost, and so it was pretty much somewhere on continental Europe and so I just went through all the universities that did international law, which is what I wanted to study, and just went through this massive list and gradually scored them off.

So, I was looking for a course that was taught in English, because I don't really have any good language skills unfortunately, so that narrowed it down further.

And then it came down to what was cheap and just the content of the courses, and then also the reputation of the university, so I looked at some of the rankings tables and I tried to see what universities had a good reputation.

And so then I narrowed it down to 3 or 4 places after considering all those different factors, and then I think it was just kind of down to Amsterdam, Leiden, Leuven, and then maybe a couple of the Scandinavian countries as well, like Copenhagen and I ruled them out based on the living costs in some of the cities would be so high.

Which ones? in Copenhagen?

Yeah, Copenhagen, and maybe somewhere in Sweden again. Even though those courses are free, I sort of thought that it probably wouldn't really work out that financially sensible any way, so probably my last 2 left on my list were Amsterdam and Leiden, and I think I just chose Amsterdam because I thought it would be a more interesting place to live in, rather than smaller town.

So you had the friends who came here straight after graduation and that opened your eyes to the possibility I guess, and they were positive. But apart from that, you didn't have any personal kind of Dutch connections before hand?

No, I wouldn't say so. I had met some Dutch friends studying in Stockholm with me studying on Erasmus, but that is probably my only Dutch connection really.

Did that make a difference, knowing them?

Probably not, no. I talked to them when I was considering it and I asked for some advice on accommodation, and that so actually as it turns out, most of them aren't really living here any more, they are sort of scattered around the place, so, it didn't actually make a huge difference.

And you told me that you made these decisions yourself. Was there any kind of element of influence from other people such as family and friends, influencing your decision?

Well, I mean the friends that had been here in Amsterdam, they were encouraging me to do it, to come here. Family wise, there wasn't really... it was sort of just whatever, you choose it is fine.

Obviously some of my friends were quite keen for me to come to Amsterdam so that they could come and visit, but yeah it was almost entirely my own decision.

And then, once you had made your decision, you are saying that certainly some friends were positive about it?

Yes, the reaction is definitely quite positive from people that hear you are moving to Amsterdam, so I have had quite a few visitors coming often, to stay with me.

Do you think that that would have been the same in a Dutch provincial city, do you think?

I don't think that it would have been, probably not. I have definitely had a lot of visitors just coming here than when I studied in Stockholm, that's for sure.

And when I came here 22 years ago, I could only keep in contact with people in the UK by writing letters, or expensive phone calls. So obviously that is totally different now, to what extent does that make it easier to make the decision to come abroad?

Yeah, I think that does make it a lot easier yeah, my girlfriend is still living in Scotland, doing a PHD in Edinburgh, so that was obviously partly considered when I was making my decisions, made it a bit more difficult to decide to move here, but we have been together a long time and we were together when I was in Stockholm as well, so we'd done the long distance thing before, and we're both quite independent, so and it is not a big problem, but it definitely makes it easier decision to have Skype, email, Facebook and various phone apps, Whatsapp, so that you can basically be in phone contact all the time and it is not a problem. But then I guess living in Amsterdam makes it easier to travel to visit each other, because I guess that if you were living in a Dutch provincial place then it would be a sort of an added couple of hours or something when you are needing to get a flight, so that definitely helps as well.

So if it had been 20 years ago, would that have prevented you from coming do you think?

It might have. Yeah I don't know, it probably wouldn't have because I wanted to come here anyways, so it probably wouldn't have but it just would have been a bit more difficult.

When did you discover that there were programs in English, was it when you heard about your friends experiences?

Yeah, so I knew sort of like immediately after when we graduated from our undergrad course together, and they told me that they were coming here; it was probably at that point that I knew that obviously they were going to learn in English as well, so I had known for a while.

And when did you find that the tuition fees were so low?

Probably when I was talking to the same friends, at the time when I graduated. At that time as well, I was also wanting to do a Masters, so it was kind of on my radar, what the options were, so I think I would have heard from them that the fees were quite low so I think it was in my mind a couple of years after graduating that I thought, this is actually quite a good option.

Do you think about other fellow friends and acquaintances from the last 2 or 3 years, who might have been looking at masters courses as well, do you think that in general they know about courses being in English and about the low tuition fees?

I think they do, yeah, I know of a couple of other friends from my undergraduate course, they had also kind of expressed some interest in Amsterdam any way, I think because we had these couple of friends who came here, there was quite a few of us who were aware of the tuition fees and aware of the English speaking options, and I'm the only one who came here since my initial couple of friends did, but other friends have definitely started English speaking masters elsewhere in Europe.

Obviously the financial aspect was crucial to you, but you needed some funding obviously to survive here, so can I ask you how have you made that work?

Yeah well, because I had been working for 3 years in between my undergrad and the Masters, I had managed to save I a fair amount for that, but I kind of realised that wherever I went for that, it wasn't enough for a year of not making any money myself, so it was mostly my own savings and then I have had to borrow from my parents so I have borrowed a certain amount of money from them, and that plus my savings, that was my plan. I did consider working as well but that just never really materialised.

Was that because it wasn't possible, or you didn't need to or what?

I think at the start, I had thought that I wouldn't need to because I thought that the money that I had saved and borrowed would cover everything for

the year, but just with the amount of work from the university increasing throughout the year, I have just sort of gotten to the point where I have thought that I probably couldn't actually have time to work as well now. I probably could have worked at the start of the year when the work load was a bit lighter, but at that time I had more money. (laughs)

Okay so looking back to before you came to the Netherlands, what did you expect it was going to be like to study here?

I don't think that I had any particular expectations, I think. I had also looked into the sort of structure of the course and how it was all taught and everything and it seemed fairly similar to the way that things here are taught at home. So I think I just assumed that it would be similar to my first degree.

And how did that end up?

Yeah, I would say that it is relatively similar I would say. Some of the people on my course from elsewhere in Europe, and further afield have found the way the course is taught a little bit unusual, but I think it is mostly similar to the way things are done at home. Yeah it has been mostly how I expected I think.

Is there anything else about coming and living in the Netherlands and Amsterdam that has surprised you, in a positive or negative way?

I don't think I have been surprised by anything, I mean I had already visited here just as a tourist so I kind of knew what the city was like, and obviously knew some Dutch people and things, so I don't think that there was any thing in particular that surprised me really.

If you could turn the clock back, would you have made a different choice?

No, I don't think so, no. I mean, it is kind of an expensive place for living costs, so maybe if I had chosen somewhere else it could have been a bit cheaper but other than that, I don't think that I would have made a different choice.

For example, would you have gone to a provincial Dutch city to study?

Probably not, I think that it would have been maybe the cheaper option, but just for the experience I don't think that I would have chosen somewhere smaller just because I don't think it would have as interesting a place to live.

If you were a marketer at a Dutch university, what aspects of studying in the Netherlands would you promote, to attract more British students?

I think I would just make a bit more awareness and like UK universities about the possibility of studying outside of the UK, I don't think that there

are that many people aware of it, obviously they are aware that it can happen but they just don't often consider it as an option, just because we are not really told anything about it, so when you get to your Bachelors and people are considering what to do next, there is not really a lot of information about that, so just trying to provide some more information to the UK universities.

Just literally that it is an opportunity?

Yeah, just like having some one visit, or something like that. Make more of a link between different universities in different countries, would be quite useful or have some visiting professors or something like that.

Are there any particular aspects that you would highlight, to persuade people to come?

I guess all of the things that attracted me in the first place, which is the lower fees and the opportunity to live somewhere different and I suppose the reputation of the university are important for people.

**If you could give me your reaction to the following statement:
The opportunity to study in the Netherlands, with it's low tuition fees, potentially helps British students, from poorer backgrounds to be able to afford to study.**

I would agree with that, because, yeah as you said, it is maybe a fifth of the price for the tuition fees, so I think that that would definitely be an attractive prospect but at the same time you would have to consider all the additional living costs. I know that my rent here is like twice what it was in Edinburgh, so you kind of have to look at the whole picture, so even though the tuition fees are better, there are other financial things to consider.

So if you can kind get through it somehow, and find a way of paying for it, then it is good?

Yes.

That's about it, unless there's anything else you can think of which you think would be relevant which you'd like to tell me?

I don't think so, I think that's covered it really.

Transcription ends at 25 min 58 sec

Transcript BAUP15

Study Abroad fair/Open day
Visited with parents.

I'm basically interested in your reasons for considering for coming to look and study in the Netherlands and Groningen?

Oh, what was it really? It was just the lower grade boundaries that had a kind of studying ethic. It is also like, the law in Britain is like three As and all that, and it is like, I wasn't confident that I could reach that high standard to get in. It is also a bit of disillusionment with the British system, that you have to pay so much, for so little contact hours, and I'm basically only pay for like, the library and all that, like, I'm not paying for the lessons. So it is just because you get more contact hours here for cheaper, it just made more sense.

So, you don't know any Dutch people here?

No, no, I don't think so, no.

And, did you know that there were British students already studying in the Netherlands?

Yeah, yeah, I did.

And where did you hear about that?

I went to the UCAS fair and they were like, 'It is not that weird to go to the Netherlands really', there's people already going. I have researched it and that.

And how do your family feel about it?

I am not really sure.(laughter)

Father: We are happy with whatever decision Sam makes. We think it is a long way to go, you know, he wouldn't be visiting as often as he would do in England.

Mother: Yeah we feel 50/50 about Cardiff and this place here.

Alright, yeah. And specifically Groningen or are you interested in other universities?

I was interested in Amsterdam, but there was a very small, very small offer from Maastricht, but I probably won't end up going there. But, I kind of was interested in the course at Maastricht but it was like, Amsterdam was the better course, I thought, but Groningen is in a better place and Maastricht is kind of in the middle. So, I think I am going moving towards Groningen.

And why is Groningen the better place?

It just seems a bit more friendlier and a bit more vibrant, and it's is not a massive city.

Mother: Yeah Amsterdam was too large; we're looking for a town of about the same size as Wrexham.

Sam: Yeah, it's too large, and there is too much going on, and it is always busy.

If you were a marketer from a Dutch university, from what you have seen so far, what would you choose to promote about it to promote more British students?

I don't know. The grade boundaries, I guess. Like, when I tell people and they react like, wow, really? 3 C's? And I am like, yeah!

People are interested when I tell them that there are lower grade boundaries.

Do your peers know about this, then?

Oh no, about studying here before I came and told them? No, people didn't know that you could apply to foreign universities until I kind of mentioned it. And they react like wow, you can actually apply abroad.

Why don't they know about it, do you think?

It hasn't really been promoted I suppose, it has always just been like 'UCAS, UCAS, UCAS.' It is not like 'ah, there are other options,' unless you really look into it. There was only this university here at the UCAS fair, and so I was like 'wow you can actually do it!'

I was wondering if there was anything else you wanted to tell me? I am interested about the motivations and what is stopping people coming? Because there are obviously lots of good reasons to come to the Netherlands.

People stop probably because of the distance. And like, that UCAS in Britain, it's reliable, your going to be able to get a job. Most people are kind of naive. Most people would think that they don't teach in English. People always ask- well, do you know Dutch? And I reply- no, it is taught in English and they can't get over it.

Okay so, it is just not known?

No, people just presume it would would be taught in Dutch.

And the finances, you don't get a government loan from the UK?

No I don't think so, I have looked and no I don't think so, but I think you can get one from the Dutch government.

So I guess you have got the low tuition fees offset by that factor?
Yeah, Its all confusing really.

Transcript ends at 5:01

Transcript BAUP16

Study abroad fair

Transcripts starts at 0:01

Perhaps in your own words could you tell me briefly what prompted you to look here?

Well they came to my college and they did a presentation. A couple of unis came, Eindhoven came, something in Amsterdam probably came, and a few did a big assembly sort of thing on it and that's what prompted me to do it. And when I looked into it, everyone was really nice and they

were all very helpful, a lot more helpful than British unis, and they all felt like they wanted you be there rather than you begging to be there, so that was a really nice reason. It's a lot cheaper, and the standards seem to be a lot higher than in the UK, so yeah it was a pretty easy choice really.

So that particular bit of promotion...

Yeah, that started it really.

But before that you weren't really aware of...?

I knew a bit, but not that it was anything really achievable.

What about fellow peers of yours? Have they also thought about it?

I think some of them thought about it, but not many, because I think a lot of them would rather live closer to home. I think that was the main thing; that they wouldn't want to move too far from home. But I think they felt that leaving the UK was a bigger step than just moving from one part to another part. I think that was mainly it.

And a lot of them haven't been to the Netherlands, so they don't know what it's like when you actually get here, because if they had the chance to come, they would see that there is no language barrier and all that kind of, so it's going to be quite easy.....

That wasn't known beforehand?

No, I didn't really know that before I came here, that every one can speak English and there is never any trouble with it.

And the accessibility, was that a factor, that you can come here quite easily?

Yeah, it is really easy to come here and also because the flights aren't expensive, and then when you get here it's about the same price as England, or probably a bit cheaper, so the only thing you've got that might be a bit expensive are the first flights out and that's only like 150 quid for three people. And then when you are here it is just the same as being in the UK.

And from the parents' point of view, anything to add?

Mother: Possibly not, I think I quite like the idea that it's easier to get in, because it gives people the opportunity to get a decent education, cause if you are not an A* star student then I think you suffer in England, because you are left with what's left over, whereas here you can work hard and get your A levels, but if you don't get those A* star grades then you can still get a decent education over here, so that's an attraction.

And the other thing is they seem to be far more organised; it seems to be really easy to find out what the courses involved and they are obviously well organised, and you can see what each course was about and who taught it, and how it was assessed, and the information is there ahead of time, and you can see what you are getting before you actually come.

And that's different in the UK?

Well, it is easier to access, because they might offer that in the universities in England but it wasn't easy to find on their websites.

Father: We are also slightly different in that I have worked in the Netherlands every so often, so not live here but I come over quite a lot. So he said he was interested in coming to a Dutch university we took the opportunity to come and visit Eindhoven and Groningen in a long weekend, and I used to teach in a UK University and the quality of the structure was just out of this world. The way they treated the students was completely different as Cas said, here they seem to want you to come where as in the UK it's rather much like they have got to present themselves as being unattainable; only for the best or for the elite.

So it is a completely different approach to students, and this way seems to put students first, so when we visited both Eindhoven and Groningen straight up, you know the quality of buildings and teachers just seem to be way ahead of what the UK is offering. As I said I've taught in a top 30 UK university and so I know what they are like, and so I have just been so impressed by the Dutch system.

Transcript ends at 4.31

Transcript BAUP17

Study abroad fair

Transcript starts at 0.04

I'm mainly interested in what kind of factors motivated you to come and look here?

Well, I just saw the university open day and thought it looked interesting, you know it's different from anything else that I've come across, you know studying abroad, so just the sort of change of scene and different approach to things, and yeah, that's the main thing.

Different scene, so, in the sense of...?

Well, just experiencing university in a different culture and a different country.

And so at what stage did you find out about the possibility of studying abroad?

A few months ago at a sort of university open day fair, sort of thing.

A general one you mean?

Yeah, it had lots of stands with different universities at it.

Study abroad or general university fair?

Just a general university fair.

And why Groningen?

They happened to be there at the open day. And they taught the subjects that I was interested in, in English.

Did you know before hand that it was possible to study abroad in English?

Yeah I did but I hadn't looked very much into it.

Do you have anything to add from the parents' point of view?

Mother: No, just about that I already knew that you could study in English in Holland in different universities, but I didn't know about Groningen actually. So I knew about Maastricht and I knew about Utrecht, they are the ones that sort of get talked about.

From what sources?

There was something on Radio 4 talking about students that have gone there. I've got a friend whose son is just on post grad at Maastricht, so you just generally read articles, media generally, that's right.

And I think Holland is a really nice place to live, it has got a different approach to academic study, it was really interesting this morning they were talking about how they don't take you on your A Level grades, because actually what they assume is that you're here and then you work and if you don't pass then you don't pass and you drop out, so it's just a very different less elitist approach to if you don't have these specific grades then you can't come, which appeals to me actually.

And apart from the idea of the child studying in another country?

That's fine, I mean it's not very far. But to be fair I did used to study here myself so I'm probably not as cautious as... also we live in central London, so anywhere seems smaller and actually safer.

And you (mother) studied in?

Leiden.

So your saying maybe its a bit of a factor in feeling comfortable?

Yeah, I guess so, but my husband is just as comfortable about it. And it's about your own child really of whether they will cope, I know Rory will cope perfectly living in a different country and he is very independent already so yeah it wouldn't be an issue.

So that wasn't a factor for you that your mother had studied here?

BAUP17: No it was good to hear that it was nice to live here.

Transcript ends at 3.26

Transcript BAUP18

Transcripts starts at 0:09

I'm interested in what brought you to think about coming here?

We went to the Student world fair didn't we, and we were looking around all the universities and there was lots of business and polytechnics or whatever and it was in the very corner and we saw the hall and it looked very nice and we saw a big picture of the cathedral church and it looked very old. That's what we said first, we were like, it looks very old, so it must be good, it's been round around a long time. And we looked around for the courses I wanted, I wanted to do physics and we spoke to the people and they were very nice. The grades were good for what I was gonna get/I am gonna get. It's much cheaper than other universities as well which is good as well.

That was an added bonus, not the main driver?

No, its not a main driver. If we found that we didn't like it we wouldn't go there no matter how much it costed so, if there was a university in England that I like more, I would go there. The cost is good but it is a bonus.

Was this a fair for universities in general also in Britain, or was it a study abroad fair?

Study abroad fair.

So at that point you already had in your mind that you might be interested in going there?

Yeah.

What brought you to that?

Just, more choices, I think.

(Father) What we did find though, at that fair was that there were a lot of universities that offer a lot of really soft subjects.

Dutch universities or...?

European universities in general. Media studies, international humanities and international relations, all that kind of stuff which they might be very valuable but in the UK they wont get you a job. This university offers art subjects and thats so of the reasons it was

Sort of an exception in Europe?

At that fair, then yeah.

And at what point did you maybe start thinking about studying abroad at all, before you went to the fair?

I don't think i thought about it at all before going to the fair. I think you (father) just said that there is a fair going on in London about studying abroad, so you can look at universities.

(Father)-Yeah there was a big advertising spread in one of the London newspapers for the study abroad fair

What that the Emirates?

Yes it was. Henry's considering his university choices and so I said, well lets have a look at that.

So, that was the main moment then?

Yeah.

Before that, did you realise that there were courses in English, in Europe?

I think I feel I was aware that there were courses in English. There had been talks at my school as well about studying abroad, not in the Netherlands specifically but abroad. They had said that most of them were done in English as well, so we assumed that it would be the same.

And peers of yours who are also looking at university, how many of them are looking abroad?

Not many, I don't think, 3 or 4 that we know of, I think.

And why is that why are not more people looking abroad?

I think they might just like being in England, staying at home. Because they think it is further away than they think, like the Netherlands, is further away than it actually is. Cause it didn't take us very long to actually get here did it? It took us just as long to get here as it took to get to Nottingham. And I don't think it was actually much more money either. I think quite a lot of people in England are quite insular about their education, and they can be a bit snobby as well I think. And then they generally look down on Europeans. Not everyone but there is a bit of an attitude.

To what extent do they know about the possibility to go abroad then?

Im not sure, I think there is a perception, and I certainly thought, that coming to Europe you would have to pay foreign student fees. I didn't realise that you pay the same fees as the Nationals, because we are all in the EU. I think that message is not getting across in the UK.

Transcript ends at 5:19

Transcript BAUP19

Transcript starts at 0:06

If you could just tell me what brought you coming here, looking here?

Well, we come to Holland like nearly every year for our holiday around Easter and we really like the country. And we were looking at universities and we saw that there were a few English speaking ones while looking for English universities, and then because we come here every year we know that this is a lot nicer than England.

You come to visit Groningen or the country?

We come to the country, Wassenaar. And we like it a lot so I think it would be nice to study here.

And friends of yours, who are also looking at universities, are they considering abroad?

Yeah I've got.... I might have to talk with them and tell them things about it because it does seem a lot nicer here. And it's still a lot cheaper as well which is also good. And the community seems nicer than England and I just like it here, it's just nice. All the buildings are really nice.

And do you think that a lot of your friends don't know there are other possibilities?

I don't think they do actually. Well most of my friends haven't even decided what kind of universities, so they are a bit weird about it.

And from the parents' point of view, how do you feel about the idea?

Mother: I kind of wished that we had come last year cause although it seems quite early for Joseph to be looking, we've now discovered that actually one of the options he had was to take maths or physics, which he didn't take, he opted for geography and computing instead and it means that he is not eligible for this course so he's gonna have to go and do the A-level Maths, whereas Harry is the year below, so he can now affect his A-Level choices. I wish we had known that, well, 12 months ago. It would have helped a little bit, it would have put out a year think somewhere along the line.

You sound basically positive about the idea of coming here?

Yeah, well I really like the idea, to be honest, it was a bonus today, we were trying to work out the finances to make sure that we can afford the living accommodation and all that. So we could claim the tuition fees as a loan, but we didn't know that you would be able to claim living accommodation as a loan which we still don't know that for certain but it sounds like it is very likely, which actually makes this even more accessible than it was. So it might well be worth waiting a year and investing a year in the A-Level maths, so he can prepare. So they would both end up coming at the same time, which might actually be useful.

And so did you say why Groningen particularly?

No not really. To be fair, that was probably your dad because he started looking at... like we said, we come every year, just to Holland as a regular family holiday, and we started looking at the English speaking universities. We actually looked at Sweden, and we looked at here, as in Holland, and France, and kind of worked our way around and eventually came to the conclusion that the best bets of English speaking are probably in Holland anyway and we are well aware of how able Dutch people are to speak English and all the rest of it. But we thought that might be an option. But it has been a 2-hour drive today so we've made a big effort to come up here because we were south of Amsterdam, but I think it has been really helpful actually.

Sweden probably has some English speaking courses as well I guess?

Mother: Yeah just a couple of English speaking courses up there. And I think the universities are even cheaper there, in some circumstances, but not living costs. So, it's not all about the finances, it is definitely about feeling comfortable.

Its a really nice place, you feel really safe here don't you, It's a safe country.

Mother: Plus in England, we will definitely have to contribute, quite significant we'll have 2 children go to university at the same time so we are definitely going to have to make a sizeable contribution even if they come out with a full loan from England. So here, they will come out with a sizeable loan but potentially it would have to add as much to it which gives us more flexibility to support them. Even when the loan is a smaller size, it is still, significant, and a lot less money to pay than England which is really nice.

Transcript Ends at 5:28

Transcript BAUP20

Study abroad fair

Transcripts starts at 0:09

I'm interested in what brought you to think about coming here?

We went to the Student world fair didn't we, and we were looking around all the universities and there was lots of business and polytechnics or whatever and it was in the very corner and we saw the hall and it looked very nice and we saw a big picture of the cathedral church and it looked very old. That's what we said first, we were like, it looks very old, so it must be good, it's been round around a long time. And we looked around for the courses I wanted, I wanted to do physics and we spoke to the people and they were very nice. The grades were good for what I was gonna get/I am gonna get. It's much cheaper than other universities as well which is good as well.

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What brought you to that?

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So, that was the main moment then?

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Transcript ends at 5:19

Transcript BAUP21

Study abroad fair

Transcript starts at 0.05

So I'm just interested in what brought you to be looking here?

Well ever since I was very young, we've come to Holland on holiday's and over time I have just really grown to like the country so, we just decided to look over here for Unis, just to also basically to come to Holland for a while and there are the added benefits of the costs being lower, and like the way that you get into the university with your grades being lower and then working to stay in, is also better.

So the initial interest was to do with already knowing it?

Just the country.

Is that from a family connection and you have just happened to have been here?

Father: We just drifted here, some one told us about a campsite, haha.

Ok, and so you already mentioned about why friends of yours maybe haven't chosen...

Yeah, I know a few people who are thinking about going abroad but, mainly it is people who came over to England to do their A-Levels, like going back to go to uni, because most people I know are going to unis in England. There were a couple of talks about unis abroad, which I don't know, maybe people didn't show interest in it afterwards with those.

And why is that, do you think?

I think, well people in England just like staying in England, it is what they know, they are not sort as lingual as other places so then they will have to learn new languages, which English people don't seem to be that good at, so they just seem to want to stay in England.

Even if they know about the possibilities?

Yeah, well it as only one or two assemblies and so people had forgotten or not paid attention.

So, maybe many of your peers might not even really know about the possibilities of going abroad?

Well, there is only so much you can say about it a 15 minute assembly about studying abroad, and usually it is just about one university, rather than an assembly of generally going abroad for university. So yeah, people might not know how many opportunities there are for studying abroad.

And from the parent point of view how do you feel about the idea? Obviously you know the Netherlands quite well already, does that help?

Mother: Yes I'm sure it does help, it makes it seem more familiar and because we live in the southeast corner, in Kent, it doesn't seem so far away for us.

Father: Yeah, we can leave our door and be here in seven hours, by car.

So that helps? Say as if it was exactly the same thing but on the other side of Europe, it might be less of an option?

Yeah, we have got to get around the M25, if he stays in England.

Transcript Ends at 3:22

Transcript BAUP22

Study abroad fair

Transcript starts at 0.06

If you could tell me in your own words how/why you came to be looking here?

Well, a lot of it is to do with tuition fees being a lot lower because right now I am changing; I am currently at Leicester University in the UK and I am changing course from maths to do computer science, so I am changing mid-way through my second year. So it really mucks it up with the tuition fees over there, so I would be paying, if I go back to England next year, which I still might be doing, it would cost £9 thousand pounds out of my pocket, just because I can't get the student loans, so that initially started making me look at going abroad, and then, with all the English taught courses here in the Netherlands, so, I found out about that..... and it is convenient financially if I'm gonna switch.

And I'm a bit of an explorer, instead of staying in the same place and feeling a bit stagnated, it is quite exciting to come abroad and try new things and as I say with the courses being taught in English, I searched in a website, I can't remember what website that was, but it helped me find which unis in the Netherlands taught the course that I was interested in, in English.

And so Groningen popped up, so I had gone to the open day, and that's....

So it was on the list. Why particularly Groningen?

Well, mainly because it was one of the only ones that does the course I want, there is one in Amsterdam which I didn't quite, well I kind of touched on it but not fully, and so I hadn't really heard about going to Groningen before so I looked into it, and it looked really nice.

And out of interest, are there fellow students who are in a similar situation who could make the same decision?

I don't know. No, I really don't know, because I am in my second year.

And at what stage did you become aware of the possibility of going abroad?

Well, I did look at it two years ago in 2013, and my dad was mentioning it because my other 2 brothers, they got the lower (3000) tuition fees, so in the interest of keeping mine not quite as high, he was looking about for me.... He quite likes a bargain and he managed to find it, and then once I decided that Maths wasn't for me any more, and realising what my financial situation would be it, it kind of seems silly if I didn't at least come and have a look.

And how have you found it?

Ah, it's a lovely city, and I would like to find out a bit more about the course so we are going to the other open day tomorrow and see the facility.

Transcript ends at 4:14